glen iris medical group
glen iris travel health

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Communication Policy

Communication with patients, their family and carers must be timely, provide information appropriate to their needs, and enable them to make informed decisions regarding their healthcare. Communication, either written or verbal and if needed using an interpreter service, is provided throughout the patient journey - before, during and after consultations.

All members of our practice team use effective, agreed communication systems to support and enhance the delivery of our integrated approach to patient-centred care.

Effective communication with patients via telephone and electronic communication (eg. emails) ensures that:

- patients can contact the practice when they need to
- patients can make appointments and receive other information in a timely fashion
- urgent enquiries are dealt with in a timely and medically appropriate way.

Members of the practice team must ensure patients are correctly identified so that patient confidentiality is not compromised. To do this, they must use 3 patient identifiers to confirm the patient's identity:

- Family name and given names
- Date of birth
- Address

It is imperative that all communications from patients are appropriately triaged and actioned.

Practice team members must adhere to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), the *Privacy Act 1988* and any state-specific laws, as well as the practice Privacy Policy.

Electronic Communications

Our practice's primary reason for communicating electronically to patients is for health management purposes.

The health management purposes include:

- Appointment scheduling (online appointment management system)
- Appointment reminders
- Health reminders (e.g. Cervical Screening Test, blood test)
- Health recall (e.g follow up of test results)
- Telehealth

Our practice allows patients an opportunity to obtain advice or information related to their care by electronic means, but only where the general practitioner determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary and that communication by electronic means is suitable.

When an electronic message is sent or received in the course of a person's duties, that message constitutes an official record. Patients are informed of any costs to be incurred as a result of the electronic advice or information being provided, and all electronic contact with patients is recorded in their health record.

Any electronic communication received from patients is used as a method to verify the contact details we have recorded on file are correct and up-to-date.

Patient authorisation for electronic communications is obtained via patient signature in the appropriate section of our New Patient Registration form (which is subsequently scanned into the patient's file), as well as via our email disclaimer when a patient requests an email from us (also recorded in the patient's health record). This authorisation can be revoked at any time by notifying staff.

All members of the practice team are made aware of our policy regarding electronic communication with patients during induction, and are reminded of this policy on an ongoing basis. They are made aware that electronic communications could be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others.

Email Communications

- The practice uses an email disclaimer notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the practice stating:

This E-mail may contain confidential or legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, please note that any use, dissemination, further distribution, or reproduction of the information in this E-mail in any form, is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify me by return E-mail and delete your copy of the E-mail immediately, and accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Any views or opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Glen Iris Medical Group.

- Our practice has an automatic email response system set up so that whenever an email is received by the practice, the sender receives the following automated message:

Thank you for contacting Glen Iris Medical Group. Please accept this as confirmation of receipt of your email. We aim to respond to emails within 2 business days. If you require a more urgent response, please call us on 03 9509 7633. If you would like to book an appointment, you can do so at anytime via our website www.glenirismg.com.au . Please note that our email is not encrypted and therefore we cannot guarantee the security of our email communications. There is a risk that emails and/or attachments could be read by someone other than the intended recipient. For this reason, we avoid sending emails that include any patient information and in particular, any sensitive health information. We discourage patients from sending emails to us with personal information.

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- If a patient requests an email from us containing their personal health information, we forward the patient the below disclaimer and they need to reply with their acceptance:

I acknowledge that the health information provided by Glen Iris Medical Group attached to this email is not encrypted and communication by email is akin to sending an open postcard. I agree to accept the risk that my health information could be viewed by others.

Once accepted, we save a copy of the consent in the patient's health record and can send the document requested.

Telehealth as a Patient Electronic Contact

Patients provide informed consent for Telehealth consultations (recorded in patient file by the doctor/nurse). Our practice uses Health Direct for video conferencing, which our IT consultant DMS, has assured that the data transmission and storage is secure.

SMS Reminder System – Automed:

- records any reminder sent in the patient file
- allows the practice to access the record of the SMS reminders sent
- the practice can identify an SMS reminder sent to a patient for a flagged recall or reminder and the response from the patient to ensure appropriate action is taken or when there is no response by the patient

If patients need to use other forms of communication (eg. Non-English speaking patients or those with a communication impairment), the following services are available to assist:

- the National Relay Service (NRS) for patients who are deaf
- the Translation and Interpreter Service (TIS National) for non-English speaking patients.