



Communication Policy

Doctors' privacy and confidentiality of patient information is considered at all times, including during telephone conversations between members of the practice team and patients. All communication is to be respectful, professional, caring, courteous, and culturally sensitive. No derogatory or offensive language is to be used and respect and compassion strictly adhered to.

Interpersonal communication

Good communication can improve outcomes for patients and doctors. The importance of good communication is so critical that Australian guidelines list effective communication as part of the required conduct for all doctors. The ability of a doctor to provide comfort through their presence and their words is a fundamental component of good medical care.

Telecommunication system

Our practice's telecommunication system facilitates patient access to the practice services and aims to adequately meet the needs of patients and team members. The auditory privacy and confidentiality need of patients have been considered when locating our telephones and facilities for electronic communication.

Our telephone system provides sufficient inward and outward call capacity and has the functionality for electronic communication (either email or facsimile). The practice has four (4) lines dedicated for telephone calls and one (1) line for electronic communication.

It is recognised that the telecommunication needs of the practice may change over time, in line with staffing changes and growth of the practice. Strategies are in place to monitor, review and make the appropriate changes to the telecommunications system as required, and this includes monitoring through feedback from patients and practice team members.



A telephone line is available for the practice team to summon assistance in an emergency.

Patients are able to contact the practice during normal business hours. If a certain staff member that the patient is requesting is not available to take the call, an internal message is sent to the staff member and is returned in a timely fashion.

Outside of business hours a recorded message is used to notify the patient of what to do in an emergency and when the practice is to reopen.

Communication with patients by written communication

Every effort is taken to ensure up-to-date contact details for patients are maintained by the practice. All written correspondence should contain limited information without sensitive information to avoid potential breaches to privacy. If sensitive information (i.e. test results) are required by the patient they are requested to come into the surgery for a consult with the referring doctor.

All written communication is either approved by the Clinical Director or the Practice Manager or in line with current processes (such as reminder and recall).

For urgent communications, the mail is sent via registered post, requiring a signature for collection.



Communication with patients by electronic means

Our practice is mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details, they may not be proficient in communicating via electronic means and patient consent needs to be obtained before engaging in electronic communication. Electronic communication via HotDoc Short Message Service (SMS).

Communication with patients via electronic means is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy.

Our practice's primary reason for communicating electronically to patients is to issue appointment reminders plus we verify the correct contact details of the patient at the time of the appointment being made.

Our practice does not communicate to patients via email or other electrical means in relation to any health concerns. Patients are requested to either phone the practice or see the doctor face to face to discuss anything in relation to their healthcare needs.

Communication with patients via electronic means through HotDoc is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy with a link sent via Short Message Service (SMS) . The link takes the patient to an identifier page that requires the patient to enter Surname, Date Of Birth before obtaining and viewing the documentation , patients are fully informed through of the risks associated with electronic communication (in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient) via information contained in the Policy on receiving and returning electronic communication .



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 can be forwarded, intercepted, printed, and stored by others. Each member of the practice team holds full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox, and they are expected to utilise this communication tool in an acceptable manner. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Limiting the exchange of personal emails
- Refraining from responding to unsolicited or unwanted emails
- Deleting hoaxes or chain emails
- Email attachments from unknown senders are not to be opened.
- Maintaining appropriate language within electronic communications
- Ensuring any personal opinions are clearly indicated as such, and
- Confidential information (e.g., patient information) must be encrypted.

Our practice reserves the right to check an individual's email accounts as a precaution against fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by members of the practice team. Inappropriate use of the email facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.



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

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

The information which is contained in this e-mail and any such attached files, including replies, forwarded copies or other information is considered strictly confidential and intended for the sole use of the addressee(s). If you have received this email in error, the contents should not be disclosed nor should copies be taken and you are requested to delete this message and to advise the sender immediately of the error in transmission. It is the responsibility of the addressee to scan this email and any attachments for computer viruses or other defects. The Lindsay Street Medical Group does not accept liability for any loss or damage of any nature, however caused, which may result directly or indirectly from this email or any file attached.
