



# Practice Communication Policy

Document 01 – 28 April 2020

## 1. Background

Healius recognises that different communication channels may be used by staff members to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients.

Our Medical Centre endeavours to obtain patient consent before initiating communication with a patient via SMS, email or other means. Consent for electronic communication is implied if the patient initiates electronic communication with the practice.

Healius Medical Centres are required to adhere to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), the Privacy Act 1988 and any state-specific laws when communicating by electronic means. In accordance with the Medical Centres Privacy Policy, our staff are required to take reasonable steps to protect patient information from unauthorised disclosure.

For further information with respect to patient privacy and confidentiality, please refer to our Privacy Policy.

## 2. Use of Email

Email may be used as a form of communication with other medical centres within the Healius network, external practices, patients or other stakeholders.

The following general directions apply:

- 1) Patients can obtain results or discuss medical information with a Health Care Professional (HCP) as part of a consultation. Practice Managers, 2ICs or reception staff members are not qualified to provide medical advice and are not entitled to discuss any medical information over email correspondence or any other communication channel. Documents resulting from a consultation with a doctor may be shared with the patient via email correspondence, upon the patients' request. All provision of medical records to patients is to be carried out by Healius's medical records department.
- 2) Medical Centres' may use email for the following communications:
  - Sending invoices;
  - Receiving requests for medical reports;
  - Receiving requests for medical records;
  - Receiving patient complaints; and
  - Sending patient information or documents (referrals, certificates, etc.) following a telehealth consultation.
- 3) A patient is required to verify their identity, by providing three points of

identification information, before email correspondence can proceed.

- 4) Requests from other practices must be sent by the requesting practice to the Healius Medical Centre's email address with details of the request and patient authorisation, when required. The Healius Medical centre will then reply to the same address, after having verified the authenticity of the requestor and the request and upon guidance from an HCP (if/as required). This measure is to limit the scope for spelling or other errors in the email address which may result in unauthorised disclosure of patient information.
- 5) An email disclaimer notice is in use for outgoing email correspondence informing our patients of the risks associated with electronic communication and of the alternative contact details available.

### 3. Use of FAX

FAX may be used as a form of communication with other medical centres within the Healius network, external practices, patients or other stakeholders.

The following general directions apply:

- 1) Patients can obtain results or discuss medical information with a Health Care Professional as part of a consultation. Practice Managers, 2ICs or reception staff members are not qualified to provide medical advice and are not entitled to discuss any medical information over email correspondence or any other communication channel.
- 2) Requests from other practices seeking patient information must be sent by the requesting practice to the Healius Medical Centre's FAX number with details of the request and patient authorisation, when required. The Healius Medical centre will then reply to the FAX, after having verified the authenticity of the request and the requestor and under the guidance of an HCP, as required.

### 4. Use of Phone

Phones may be used as a form of communication with other medical centres within the Healius network, external practices, patients or other stakeholders.

The following general directions apply:

- 1) Patients can obtain results or discuss medical information with a Health Care Professional as part of a consultation. Practice Managers, 2ICs or reception staff members are not qualified to provide medical advice and are not entitled to discuss any medical information over email correspondence or any other communication channel.
- 2) A patient is required to verify their identity, by providing three points of identification information, before any personal information is disclosed over the phone.
- 3) Other practices requesting patient information over the phone are to be instructed to send their request to the Medical Centre's email address or FAX with details of the request and patient authorisation, when required. The Healius Medical centre will then reply, after having verified the authenticity of the request and consulted with an HCP, as required.

## 5. Use of SMS

Medical Centres may utilise SMS communications to issue appointment reminders and recalls via the Practice Management Systems (PMS) in use at the centre.

This is also conducted with appropriate regards to patient privacy and confidentiality.

Communication with patients or other external stakeholders via SMS, outside of the appropriate PMS processes, is not permitted.