



Understanding Privacy - the Federal Privacy Act

Information for anaesthetists, practice staff, and patients

COLLECTION

It may be necessary for this practice to collect personal information from patients (and sometimes from others associated with their health care) in order to attend to their health needs and for associated administrative purposes.

SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Health information is 'sensitive information' for the purposes of privacy legislation. This means that patients' consent will generally be sought to collect health information that is necessary for an accurate medical diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and patient care.

USE AND DISCLOSURE

A patient's personal health information is used or disclosed only for purposes directly related to their health care and in ways that are consistent with their expectations. In the interests of the highest quality health care, this may include the sharing of information with other health care providers who comprise a patient's 'medical team'. In addition, there are circumstances when information may have to be disclosed without patient consent, such as:

Emergency situations

By law, doctors are sometimes required to disclose information for public interest reasons eg mandatory reporting of some communicable diseases.

It may be necessary to disclose information about a patient to fulfil a medical indemnity insurance obligation.

Provisions or information to Medicare or private health funds, if relevant, for billing and medical rebate purposes.

In general a patient's health information will not be used for any other purposes without their consent.

There are some necessary purposes of collection for which information will be used beyond providing health care, such as professional accreditation, quality assessment, clinical auditing, billing and so forth.

DATA QUALITY

All patient information held by this practice relevant to the functions of providing health care will be maintained in a form that is accurate, complete and up to date.

DATA SECURITY

The storage, use, and where necessary, transfer of personal health information, will be undertaken in a secure manner that protects patient privacy. It is necessary for medical practices to keep patient information after a patient's last attendance for as long as is required by law, or is considered prudent having regard to administrative requirements.

OPENNESS

This practice has made this and other material available to patients to inform them of our policies in regards the management of personal information. On request, this practice will generally let patients know what sort of personal information we hold, for what purposes, and how we collect, hold, use and disclose that information.

ACCESS AND CORRECTION

Patients may request access to their personal health information held by this practice.

Where necessary, patients will be given the opportunity to amend any personal information held that is considered incorrect.

There are some circumstances in which access is restricted, and in these cases reasons for denying access will be explained.

A charge may be payable where the practice incurs costs in providing access.

This practice acknowledges the right of children to privacy of their health information. Based on the professional judgement of the doctor and where consistent with the law, it might at times be necessary to restrict access to personal health information by parents or guardians.

Upon request a patient's health information held by this practice will be made available to another health service provider.

We may provide information to Medicare or private health funds, where relevant, for billing and medical rebate purposes.

In general a patient's health information will not be used for any other purposes without their consent.

IDENTIFIERS

These are the numbers, letters or symbols that are used to identify patients, with or without the use of a name (eg Medicare number). We will limit the use of identifiers assigned to patients by Commonwealth Government agencies to those uses necessary to fulfil our obligations to those agencies.

ANONYMITY

A patient has the right to be dealt with anonymously, provided this is lawful and practicable. However, in the medical context this is not likely to be practicable or possible for Medicare and insurance rebate purposes. It could also be dangerous to a patient's health.

TRANSBORDER DATA FLOWS

An individual's privacy is protected Australia wide by privacy laws.

We will take steps to protect patient privacy if information is to be sent interstate or outside Australia.

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THE FEDERAL PRIVACY ACT

The Federal Privacy Act incorporates 10 National Privacy Principles (the 'NPPs') that set out the rules for the handling of personal information in the private sector.

In the interests of providing quality health care this practice has developed a privacy policy that complies with the privacy legislation and the NPPs.

COMPLAINTS

Patients should feel free to discuss any concerns, questions or complaints about any issues related to the privacy of their personal information with their doctor, if a patient is dissatisfied the Federal Privacy Commissioner, whose details are below, handles complaints.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about an individual's privacy rights can be obtained from the Federal Privacy Commission's Office at:

Level 8 Piccadilly Tower
133 Castlereagh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2000
Privacy Hotline: 1300 363 992
Website: www.privacy.gov.au

The address and contact details of this practice are: