



## **PRIVACY POLICY**

Wollahra Medical Centre is committed to providing quality health care for its patients. The practice appreciates the importance of ensuring that our patients are fully informed and involved in their health care.

It is the policy of Wollahra Medical Centre to always maintain security of personal health information and to make sure this information is only available to authorised members of staff.

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### **PURPOSE:**

To make sure our patients can trust their health information to the Practice. This policy explains to patients how their personal information (which includes their health information) is collected and used within the Practice, and the circumstances in which we may disclose it to third parties.

### **PRACTICE PROCEDURE**

The Practice will:

- provide a copy of this policy upon request – at no cost
- take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to implement practices, procedures and systems to ensure compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles (APP) and deal with any questions or complaints
- collect personal information for the purpose of looking after the patient's health and the running of the practice.

### **STAFF RESPONSIBILITY**

The Practice's staff will take reasonable steps to make certain patients understand:

- what information has been and is being collected
- why the information is being collected, and whether this is for a legal reason
- how the information will be used or given to people
- why and when their consent is necessary



- how the practice arranges access to and correction of information held by the practice
- how the practice responds to complaints of information breaches.

### **COLLECTION & USE:**

Wollahra Medical Centre recognises that the information we collect is often very private and as an organisation we will make sure that we keep all patients' personal information safe and secure. The personal details we collect will help us create a detailed medical file. This will help us to give ongoing medical care and help us to give advice as to how patients can stay healthy. A patient's file will be used by their regular doctor, and when necessary (if the patient's usual doctor is away) by other doctors in the practice. It may also be necessary for our staff to handle a patient's file from time to time for the running of the medical practice.

### **The personal information we need to collect is as follows:**

- Patient's name, address and contact details
- Health Care Card/ Pension/DVA Number
- Individual Health Identifiers (a special number given to each patient who is registered with Medicare / Veteran Affairs)
- Medical Information which includes medical / past history, allergies, medications, adverse events, immunisations, social / family history and risk factors.

### **How we collect patients' personal information.**

- We have a "New Patient Registration Form" to be filled in when a patient comes to the clinic for the first time. The form is available on our website and can be completed and either emailed to an inbuilt dedicated email address (on the webpage) or brought with the patient when they come to the clinic. Patients can also get these forms at the clinic.
- Personal Information may be collected from the patient's guardian or responsible person (if necessary) or from other Healthcare specialists / providers, such as pathology laboratories or X-ray providers.
- A patient's doctor / nurse will collect further information if a patient is being seen at the clinic.

### **A patient's personal information held by the practice can be in various forms.**

- Paper records
- Electronic Records, including downloaded results and letters
- X-rays, CT scan, Echo cardiogram and Stress Echocardiograms etc

### **As a condition of working at the clinic our staff must keep strict confidentiality regarding a patient's medical record.**

### **DISCLOSURE:**

Wollahra Medical Centre will not give personal information to anybody else, without the patient's consent. However, there are times where the law requires us to disclose information we hold.

- Subpoena (information requested by a court of law)
- Mandatory reporting of communicable diseases (diseases which can be passed on to other people), which we have to tell the government health department about to prevent further spread
- Necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to a patient's life, health or safety or public health or safety and where it is not possible to get the patient's permission (e.g. if they are unconscious).
- To assist in locating a missing person



- For the purpose of a confidential dispute resolution process (to try and sort out a legal problem a patient is involved in relating to their health). But this would usually only be with the patient's permission.

**Other reasons where we may disclose patient information:**

- Telling others involved in a patient's health care, including doctors and specialists outside this practice who may become involved in treating the patient (e.g. pathology services, radiology services and in emergency situations). This may occur through referral to other doctors or specialists, or for medical tests and in the reports or results returned to us following the referrals.
- To add to medical registers to improve community health care (for example, Pap smear register).
- Administrative purposes in running our medical practice, including our insurer or medical indemnity provider, and quality assurance and accreditation bodies (organisations, which make sure proper standards are being kept).
- Billing purposes, including providing information to Medicare Australia and other organisations responsible for the money aspects of a patient's care.
- For doing medical research. Patients will be told when such activities are being carried out and involvement will only take place if the patient gives signed permission for each program where the patient can be personally identified. De-identified information (where the patient cannot be personally identified) can be used for research purposes without their consent. This only occurs with NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) approved research projects. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>
- Assisting with training and education of other health professionals. Patients will be informed when such activities are being conducted, and involvement will only take place if the patient provides permission to their medical practitioner for each program.

The Practice will not use any personal information of a patient in relation to direct marketing without their consent (i.e.: for the purpose of advertising and selling).

The Practice will not disclose personal information to anyone outside Australia without need and without patient consent.

**Electronic Transfer of Prescription:**

Wollahra Medical Centre uses the electronic transfer of prescriptions (eTP) which is a secure exchange of prescription information between prescribing (doctor) and dispensing systems (pharmacy). A patient prescription is generated and printed from the doctor's computer which includes a printed barcode. Electronic transfer of the prescription occurs at this point by sending a copy of the information on the prescription to the prescription exchange service (PES). The patient will then present the paper prescription to the pharmacist, the barcode is scanned, and the information is sent directly to the pharmacy dispensing system from the PES without the need to re-enter the information into the chemist's computer. The greater use of electronic prescribing processes will improve the accuracy and safety of prescribing and dispensing.

**Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR):**

Wollahra Medical Centre has the necessary systems in place to create a PCEHR for patients at their request. In order for this to be created we need to collect the patient's Individual Health Identifier which we can do electronically with their consent. If a patient has a PCEHR in place it will require uploading and downloading of the patient's personal / medical information for it to remain up to date.

**SECURITY & STORAGE:**

Secure storage policies are observed in this practice. Electronic records are strictly controlled by personal passwords. Patients' paper records are kept secure and accessible only by practice staff. Each member of staff is well versed in the principles and importance of doctor-patient confidentiality.

**ACCESS:**

A patient of this practice has the right to access any information we hold concerning them. If a patient wishes to access this information, they can refer to our handout entitled "**ACCESSING YOUR MEDICAL RECORD**". Printed copies of this handout are



readily available at Reception. Retention of medical records is for a minimum of 7 years from the date of last entry into the patient record unless the patient is a child in which case the record must be kept until they reach the age of 25 years

### **CORRECTIONS:**

It is important that we keep personal information up to date. When a patient changes any of their details held by us we need to be notified.

An update form called "Update Your Details" is available for patients to notify the practice of any change to their details. The form is available from the

- Reception Counter
- Website-which can be updated and emailed to an inbuilt dedicated email address (on the webpage).
- Website-which can be printed off to complete and brought to their next appointment

### **PRIVACY CONCERNS:**

Wollahra Medical Centre understands the importance of confidentiality and takes complaints and concerns regarding breach of privacy very seriously. If a patient wishes to lodge a complaint or has any queries regarding our Privacy Policy or how we handle their information they can write to

"Private & Confidential"  
Practice Principal  
76 Wollahra Medical Centre  
Wyndham Vale , VIC 3024

OR

National Privacy Commissioner  
Telephone: 1330 363 992

Website: [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)