

Communication Policy

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Introduction:

Electronic communication is essential for sharing clinic news and information with our patients. Our communication will be timely, appropriate and related to clinic business.

Scope & Reference:

This policy covers all modes of communication between staff of GSS or between staff of GSS and its clients which includes patients, their relative, other members of public, etc. It extends to include verbal or written, electronic or hard copy, offline or online, face to face or telephonic or any such means where a person interacts with another.

Website:

In this digital age, website-based information provides an important tool to those who seek such information and disseminate company details. At the same time, due to its reach, it can be detrimental to our values and aims if not used appropriately with care and caution. We aim to use this tool effectively and responsibly.

Our website will include current information and no offensive content or photos will be published.

We will seek feedback from patients to improve the information available on the site and where possible improve it based on this feedback.

Email Communication:

We understand that in today's world, email communication is the primary mode of initial & subsequent communication. It provides for an opportunity to transmit information in written format to others with the benefit of being able to track communication. It is, also, exposed to cyber risk nuances.

Due to this risk, we do not encourage transmission of health care related or personal information by email service. As with any material in cyber domain, we take any email communication seriously.

To comply with the provisions of Australian Privacy Regulations, any email transmission of a document containing patient related sensitive information should be secured with a password. The password should be communicated to relevant parties by a separate mode (e.g. in person, by SMS, over fax, etc.). **It is strictly forbidden to transmit any unsecured document containing sensitive patient information** by email.

We expect that email communication within staff members and to others (in their official capacity):

- Is restricted for work related use only; and
- Should be limited in terms of the personal information or healthcare related content to the bare minimum required for the purpose; and
- Must not offend, intimidate, humiliate or bully another person; and
- Must not be misleading, false or injure the reputation of another person; and
- Should respect and maintain the privacy of patients; and
- Must not bring the clinic into disrepute.

Employees / associates / affiliates may face disciplinary action for sending inappropriate electronic communication or posting online content or comments that harass, offend, intimidate or humiliate another employee.

Everyone at our practice has an obligation to know and comply with this policy, as amended from time to time. Managers are responsible for ensuring all relevant staff members are informed of this policy. While managers will endeavor to keep staff updated, it will be the individual responsibility of the staff member to keep abreast with any changes to it.

Telephone Communication:

A telephone call is a principle method for initial and subsequent communication by a patient and to other person(s) within this Practice. The telephone is recognized as a vital device for creating a positive and first impression response, express compassion, a confident approach and acting as a reassuring resource for our patients and non-patents.

Our aim is to facilitate optimal communication opportunities with our patients. All members of the practice are aware of alternative modes of communication used by patients with a disability or a language barrier.

Some patients may be anxious, are in pain or distracted by their own family members or concerned friends. Our staff members will act to provide a professional and empathetic service whilst attempting to obtain adequate information from the patient or caller.

It is important for patients when telephoning our Practice that their urgent needs are determined promptly. Staff should obtain adequate information from the patient to assess whether the call is an emergency before placing the call on hold. Staff members are trained and continue ongoing training as it is important to recognize urgent medical matters and the procedures for obtaining urgent medical attention. Staff members have general information and guidance available to decide when to put telephone calls through to the Doctor(s) for clarification.

The Doctor(s) determine if advice can be given on the phone or if an appointment is necessary, being mindful of clinical safety and patient confidentiality. Patients are advised if a fee will be incurred for phone advice. Non-medical staff members do not provide advice over the phone. Each Doctor has a preferred method in which calls are to be handled and, in addition to this, there may be other factors which lead to a variation in how the calls are handled on case to case basis.

Staff, especially managers and supervisors, are encouraged to read this policy in conjunction with other relevant Gawler Surgical Specialists policies, including

- Complaints resolution policy
- Social media use policy
- Workplace discrimination and anti-harassment policy

Document information:

Version:	2.1
Date of first approval:	16-Jan-19
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Revision points:	Addition of paragraph in section discussing email communication to include use of passwords to protect documents in compliance with Australian Privacy Regulations.