

EMAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

**CORNERSTONE FAMILY PRACTICE
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Introduction

Cornerstone family practice Bungendore recognises the practice team requires access to email and the internet to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients. Cornerstone family practice supports the right of staff to have access to reasonable personal use of the internet and email communications in the workplace using the devices and networks provided by the practice.

Policy

This policy sets out guidelines for acceptable use of internet and email by the practice team, contractors and other staff of cornerstone family practice. Internet and email is provided primarily to assist the team carry out their duties of employment. Our practice is mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details , they may not be proficient in communication via electronic means and patient consent needs to be obtained before engaging in electronic communication. Electronic communication includes email, facsimile and short message service(SMS)

Procedure

Our practice's primary reason for communicating electronically to patients is to issue appointment reminders and we verify the correct contacts details of the patient at the time of the appointment being made. Whilst not encouraged ,our practice allows patients an opportunity to obtain advice or information related to their care by electronic means but only where the general practitioner determines that a face- to face consultation is unnecessary and that communication by electronic means is suitable. Our practice will only provide information that is of a general , non-urgent nature and will not initiate electronic communication(other than SMS appointment reminders)with patients.

Communication with patients via electronic means is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy. Before obtaining and documenting the patients consent ,patients are fully informed through information contained in the new patient registration form of the risks associated with electronic communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient.

When an email message is sent or received in the course of a persons duties ,that message is a business communication and therefore constitutes an official record. Patients are informed of any costs to be incurred as a result of the electronic advise or information being provided and all electronic contact with patient is recorded in their health records

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 communication could 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 mail box 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
- Not opening email attachments from unknown senders
- Virus checking of all email attachments
- Maintaining appropriate language within electronic communication

Unacceptable internet and email use

The practice team, contractors and other staff may not use internet or email access provided by cornerstone family practice to

- creating or exchanging messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene or threatening.
- visiting web sites containing objectionable (including pornographic) or criminal material
- exchanging any confidential or sensitive information held by your general practice.
- creating, storing or exchanging information in violation of copyright laws
- using internet-enabled activities such as gambling, gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities
- creating or exchanging advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited or bulk email
- playing electronic or online games in work time.

Our practice serves the right to check an individuals email account as a precaution to fraud , virus , 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.

All employees are required to confirm that they have understood and agree to abide by this email and internet policy

Policy review statement

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if need be to ensure it reflects the current processes and procedures of cornerstone family practice and current legislation requirements.