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Email Policy

Email can be used as a form of communication between the Practice and patients or other health providers. Ideally communication should be via secure messaging or encryption but this is generally not possible when emailing patients.

The practice has an obligation to take reasonable steps to protect the privacy and security of information it holds including when it is transmitted or disclosed outside the organisation.

The practice follows the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) recommendations to reduce the risk of interception of data and sending emails to incorrect addresses, including:

- use of passwords for sensitive information
- verification of the patient's email address
- obtaining patient consent
- use of secure messaging facilities between practices where available

Procedure

Request for information to be sent via email

If a patient requests information to be sent by email, the practice:

1. Explains to the patient that email is not a secure form of communication
2. Seeks the patient's consent to use email and asks the patient to provide the email address they would like the practice to use (in the same way the practice asks for a contact phone number)
3. Notes that sensitive information will be sent by password protected PDF
4. An SMS is sent or a phone call is made to the patient with the password to open the PDF.

The practice will document the patient consent and maintain a record of information sent via email to the patient in accordance with the email policy.

Patients emailing the practice via the practice website

This form of email is not encrypted and is directed to the clinic's general email address (admin@thecranegp.com.au). The practice advises patients via the practice website of the risks of sending clinical information via unencrypted email. The patient then makes an informed decision of what medium of communication to be used to send their own personal information to them.

The clinic email address (admin@thecranegp.com.au) and email addresses belonging to our Practitioners are not regularly monitored throughout the day and is not our preferred means of time critical communication. There is a risk that important clinical information sent to these email addresses may be missed or not picked up. We encourage patients to phone the practice or make an appointment to discuss time critical clinical issues. Please do not use normal post for forwarding time critical information.

Third party email requests

In the event another health provider requests information to be sent via email, the procedure for sending password protected PDF files via email must be adhered to.

With the measures stated above, the risk of a data breach is **LOW** in reference to the RACGP Using email in General Practice – Privacy and Security Matrix.

Data breach

In the event of a privacy breach, the practice has a data breach response plan to ensure that quick actions can be taken to resolve the issue.

Policy Review Statement

This Email policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it is up-to-date.

