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TCGP Telephone and SMS Policy

Telephone Policy

Effective handling of patient phone calls is an important part of our service provision. To facilitate this, reception staff are trained in these practices:

- We will always gain permission from callers before placing them on hold. This gives the caller a chance to say if they have an emergency situation.
- Reception will rate the urgency of a call and when it is necessary to transfer calls to GPs or other clinical staff.
- If clinical information has been conveyed during a phone call, the contents of the call is recorded within the patient's record.

Clear communication is critical to providing optimal healthcare. For hearing impaired or non-English speaking background (NESB) patients, our practice may engage the following services:

- National Relay Service (NRS) for deaf and hearing-impaired patients
- Translation and Interpreter Service (TIS) for NESB patients.

Three points of identification are required to be taken over the phone before information is passed on to a patient or an appointment is booked.

SMS Policy

Patient authorisation for SMS contact requires:

- Patient signature in the appropriate section of our New Patient Registration form (scanned to patient file).
- Confirmation of mobile number at each visit.
- The message not to include sensitive health information (e.g pathology results).
- The message to include practice name and how to contact the practice.
- Inclusion of the message in the patient's record.

When patients will receive SMS messages from our clinic:

- Appointment Reminders
- Clinical Reminders, for example: Cervical Screen or Annual Fasting Bloods.
- Results Notification (callbacks)
- Non-clinical correspondence from reception
- SMS Campaigns from the clinic

Patients can opt out of receiving any or all of these SMS messages by replying STOP or by calling the clinic to request that they be disabled.

Patients contacting the practice via SMS:

SMS replies are not routinely monitored throughout the day and contacting our practice via SMS is not a primary means of communication. There is a risk that important information sent via SMS may be missed. Unless patients have received a direct SMS message from the practice requesting a response, it is recommended that patients utilise a designated communication medium. For clinical and/or time critical queries, we encourage patients to phone the practice or make an appointment. For non-clinical queries, patients are advised to review the practice's [email policy](#).