***Purpose***

This pamphlet explains how personal information about you and your health is recorded and managed in our practice. We also have a written privacy policy describing how we manage personal information which can be accessed via our practice website.

[www.berwickhealthcare.com.au](http://www.berwickhealthcare.com.au)

***Personal information***

The ‘personal information’ we collect includes your name, date of birth, address/es, contact details, Medicare number, healthcare identifiers and health fund details if applicable. Medical information may include medical history and any care you may need. GPs need information about your past and present health in order to provide you with high-quality care.

Our practice follows the guidelines of the RACGP’s Handbook for the management of health information in general practice (the Handbook). The Handbook incorporates federal and state privacy legislation, and the Australian Privacy Principles, which requires that your personal information is kept private and secure.

The practice team can describe how we correctly identify our patients using 3 patient identifiers, name, and date of birth, address or gender to ascertain we have the correct patient record before entering or actioning anything from that record.

***Your medical records***

This practice takes steps to ensure that your medical records:

* are accurate, complete, well-organised and legible
* are up-to-date
* contain enough information to allow another GP to care for you
* contain a summary of your care
* can be used to remind you, with your permission, to return for follow up, check-ups and reviews.

If you are uncertain why information is being requested, please ask your GP. If you wish to remain anonymous while accessing healthcare services, please talk to the practice staff.

***Providing your information to other GPs***

In this practice, it is normal for all GPs to have access to your medical records. If you have any concerns about this please discuss them with your GP or practice staff.

It is important that other people involved in your care, such as medical specialists and other healthcare professionals, are informed of the relevant parts of your medical history, so they can provide the best care for you. Your GP will let you know when this is necessary.

***Providing your information to others***

GPs respect your right to decide how your personal information is used or shared. For example, this may be sharing your health information with specialist doctors. Personal information that identifies you will only be sent to other people with your consent, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Gaining your consent is the guiding principle used by this practice in using and sharing your information.

Our practice will not share your personal health information with anyone else or another organisation unless:

* you have consented to this sharing, or
* they are legally obliged to disclose the information, in which case your GP will first discuss with you the information that she or he is legally obliged to disclose, or
* the information is necessary for you to obtain Medicare payments or other health insurance rebates, or
* there is an overriding public health and safety interest in the release of the information.

There may be instances where you will want your information transferred to a third party. This can be arranged by filling in and signing a Medical Records Transfer Form. All transfer of patient records are imported on to CD and sent via registered mail.

Our practice prefers not to use the public email system for communicating sensitive information due to security risks. We will email if you give consent with the understanding that your private information may be intercepted by a third party.

The maintenance of privacy requires that any information regarding individual patients may not be disclosed either verbally, in writing, in electronic form, by copying either at the Practice or outside it, during or outside work hours, except for strictly authorised use within the patient care context at the Practice or as legally directed.

In the above cases, only information necessary to meet the requirements will be provided. Your health information will not ordinarily be sent overseas unless:

* you are informed and provide consent for this to occur, and
* the overseas country receiving the information has privacy laws that are very similar to the Australian Privacy Principles.

***Using health information for quality improvement and research***

This practice may use patient health information to assist in improving the quality of care we give to all our patients, by reviewing the treatments used in the practice.

Your information held by the practice may be used in research projects to improve healthcare in the community; however, this information will not include data that can identify you.

The information used for research, including the publication of research results, will not be in a form that would allow you to be identified, unless the research serves an important public interest. In such cases, identifiable medical records can be used for medical research without your consent under guidelines issued by the Australian Government. Before providing such identified information, your GP will discuss with you the information that she or he is obliged to disclose.

***Security of information in the practice***

Australian privacy legislation applies to all personal health information recorded in electronic and paper records. All records are kept secure to protect against unauthorised access.

This practice computers and servers comply with the RACGP computer security checklist and we have a sound back up system and a contingency plan to protect the practice from loss of data.

***Access to your health information***

***Contacts***

If you have questions or a complaint about the privacy of your personal information.

Please ask to speak to the Practice Manager at the practice.

**Further information on privacy legislation is available from:**

**Office of the Australian Information Commissioner**

1300 363 992

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

**Office of the Health Services Commissioner**

Victoria – 1300 582 113

*www.health.vic.gov.au/*

You may ask practice staff about any aspect of your healthcare, including information contained in your record. You can request access to your medical record and any other information the practice records about you.

Sharing information is important for good communication between you and practice staff. Your GP is able to provide a full explanation of the health summary or medical record you are provided access to.

Depending on what is involved, you may be asked to contribute to the cost of providing the information.

*Keeping your personal information private in our practice*

 If you have any concerns regarding the privacy of your personal health information or the accuracy of the information held by the practice, you should discuss these with your GP.

***Direct marketing***

Our practice will from time to time offer a service to our patients for the improvement of their health and wellbeing. We endeavor to gain permission from you at the time of registering with the practice. If you would prefer not to receive reminders by SMS or emails please let reception know.



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