

Privacy and Confidentiality at Ara Health Centre

Information for Patients

You may have questions about access to and the use of information about you held by this Health Centre, therefore the following material has been produced for your reassurance and information.

The Health Centre follows the New Zealand Health Information Privacy Code. You can read the full text of this at the Privacy Commissioner website.

<http://privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/>

All Health Centre Staff and visiting staff and trainees are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Clinical information is not available to academic staff or other Ara staff. There are some exceptions:

- Information contained in medical certificates or aegrotats are provided to other Ara staff with your consent.
- The Ara Health and Safety Manager will be informed of any notifiable diseases diagnosed in students/staff as this is a legal requirement.
- The Ara Health and Safety Manager will be informed if you sustain a work/study related accident whilst at Ara.

Medical information about you is kept on computer using the 'Medtech' system, although some patients may have old 'hard' notes as well. Only staff of this clinic have access to the computer information.

Access

Computer Medical Notes

- These can be accessed by all staff but there is a facility within our computer system for making particular consultation notes only accessible to specified providers should you wish us to do this on any occasion.
- No member of the staff is permitted to browse without proper reason.
- All staff and trainees and also IT support staff sign confidentiality agreements.

Counselling notes

The counselling staff do not currently record their notes within the 'Medtech' system. Their notes are kept on hard file in locked filing cabinets.

Access to your own notes

You are welcome to peruse or have copies of your own notes. We usually require proof of identity for this, and also usually enable this in the presence of a Doctor/counsellor in case there are items that require clarification or interpretation.

If you believe there are any incorrect entries we are happy to annotate your file to this effect. We do not however, delete any data in this circumstance except in the case of there being some other person's medical information wrongly entered in your file.

Disposal and retention of notes

Redundant health Information e.g. copies of letters or results which have been filed electronically are shredded on site by Ara Health Centre staff.

Medical notes

Medical notes which exist as hard files are retained in the Health Centre for about three years and then transferred to the locked, secure facility off campus to which only we have access. We are required to keep this material for 10 years from the date of last data entry.

Computerised clinical files are 'inactivated' when a student advises they have left our care or if it becomes apparent that they will not be attending us again due to leaving Ara, going overseas, etc. The files remain retrievable within the system should they be required.

Counselling notes

When a counsellor leaves, his/her files are transferred to their own locked and secure storage system.

Transfer of notes

When you leave the Ara Health Centre we are happy to transfer your medical file to your next GP. We do not normally include your counselling files unless specifically requested. We do not transfer any notes to other parties without your consent unless there is a legal requirement to do so e.g. to the coroner after a suicide.

Communication

We utilise the following means of communication: letters, text, cell phone and landline calls and email. In all cases we strive to be discreet if messages are left.

Privacy and sharing of your Health Information

This practice is bound by the 'Health Information Privacy Code'. We are required to inform you what happens to the information we collect on you. We have a copy of the Code if you would like to see it. You can also read it at the Privacy Commissioner's website: <http://privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act/>

You may request to see and correct any information we hold about you.

All the information you impart is strictly confidential to the Practice.

There are some instances when information we have collected about you will be shared with others:

- In the interests of quality medical care (see examples below). This includes the rare instances where there is perceived to be serious risk to the life or health of you or others. It also includes using information in practice activities e.g. screening, preventive health reminder systems, etc.
- For you to obtain financial benefits under the health and social welfare systems

- For the Practice to participate in contracts relating to pharmaceutical and laboratory budget holding with a Primary Health Organisation.

The following is a list of instances of sharing of information which you should be aware of:

- Name, address, gender, date of birth, date of contact with the practice, etc. (**No medical information**) may given to:
 - Ministry of Health's funding agency (name subject to change)
 - Accident Compensation – see below also
 - An independent practitioners association (IPA) or a Primary Health Organisation (PHO) – see below also
 - Your pharmacy in your prescription and then on to Ministry of Health

In addition to the above information, RELEVANT Medical Information is given:

- If you are seen at emergency departments or afterhours clinics, authorised personnel may access relevant medical information that we hold through the (developing) 'shared record'.
- ACC with your consent (when you sign an M45, you consent to the release of information to ACC)
- Ministry of Health Funding agency when you apply for a high user card, or the practice makes a maternity benefit claim on your behalf, (pregnancy number and date of last period for maternity claims) or a GMS claim
- Income Support when you apply for a Disability Allowance, Sickness Benefit
- Medical Laboratories when you are referred for tests (to aid interpretation of results)
- Community/Public Health in instances of Notifiable Diseases
- Smear test results, previous smear history to the Cervical Screening Register via the Laboratory with your consent
- The police on request, only in very limited circumstances covered in detail under the Health Information Privacy Code
- The coroner in some cases of death
- The Ministry of Health and/or local practitioners in cases where people are trying to obtain prescription drugs for illegal purposes
- Intensive Medicines Monitoring Program for patients on medicines in this program
- Medicines Adverse Reactions Committee for patients with a significant drug reaction

Detailed information is often given to:

- Any specialist or other health care service to which you are referred with your consent
- Insurance Companies to ascertain Medical, Life or Disability Cover for you - you consent to this when you sign the application for the policy.

If you have any concerns or queries about the above, please speak to your Doctor or Health Centre Manager.