

TELEPHONE AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

The practice has a telecommunications system adequate to its needs.

ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE

- The telephone is answered promptly in a clear, caring and professional manner.
- The person answering the call should:
 - identify the name of the practice and then themselves
 - establish the nature of the enquiry
 - fulfil the needs of the caller
- Assess the urgency of the need and deal with it according to a triaging system (see Urgent Medical Problems). If in doubt, ask the nurse or a doctor or treat as an emergency. (see **A guide to urgency for non-clinical staff in general practice**)
- When putting the caller on hold:
 - ask if the caller minds being put on hold and wait for a reply
 - thank the caller for waiting.
- If the caller has to hold the line for more than a few minutes, take the caller's number and call them back.
- If the caller is angry or distressed, try to connect them with an administrative/nursing staff member who can meet their needs more easily and confidentially.
- If the caller requests a test result, either take the call in the filing room or connect them with a staff member working in the administration area.
- If the caller requests a referral or script, encourage the caller to make an appointment
- All telephone messages of a clinical nature are to be recorded on emails in archived folder.

CLINICAL INFORMATION OVER THE PHONE (Criterion 1.1.2)

Patients are able to obtain information or advice related to their clinical care by telephone and electronic means in a situation where the doctor determines that this is clinically safe and that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary.

IF THE CALLER WISHES TO SPEAK TO A DOCTOR:

- Record message and send it via internal email to the doctor concerned
- Ensure that sufficient information is obtained to evaluate whether an immediate response is required from the doctor.
- The name and contact phone number of the patient/caller:

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- The date and time of the call
- The urgent or non-urgent nature of the call
- Important facts concerning the patient’s condition
- The advice or information received from the doctor
- Details of any follow up appointments
- If there is any doubt, put the call through to the nurse to triage further
- Always put through other doctors and hospital nurses (not necessarily nursing home staff)
- Doctors need to make time to return emails during the day and where ‘clinically significant’ information is discussed, a note must be made in the patient’s health record.
- Emails of all calls from patients are kept for future reference, if necessary.

TELEPHONING/TEXTING PATIENTS FOR CONSULTATION REMINDER

All patients are to be given a reminder SMS the day before the appointment.

AFTER HOURS TELEPHONE MESSAGE

Ensure that the message is activated at close of surgery each day.

PERSONAL PHONE CALLS

Should be kept to a minimum and taken away from the reception desk (see **Telephone Usage Policy**)

ON HOLD (Criterion 1.1.2C)

On hold says “Ring 000 if this is an emergency” and gives information about services offered by Pro Health Care.

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