



The Rowley Road Clinic

Communication Policy

May 2025

For Communication with Patients

Our main objective is to implement a communication policy that enables patients concerns to be effectively communicated to us, in a timely and legible way. Our practice utilises a wide variety of communication methods to achieve this objective in an appropriate and convenient way allowing patients to have timely information about their healthcare.

The communication pathways that we utilise are:

Face-to-Face

Patients communicate with our practice face-to-face whenever they attend the clinic. These interactions occur with our reception staff, the doctors and at times the nurses.

A common-sense approach is utilised by reception staff when discussing sensitive information with patients face-to-face at the reception desk, with particular attention paid to the need to maintain each patient's privacy.

Telephone

Patients can contact the clinic via telephone on 08 8557 5876 on Monday-Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm. Telephone calls received by the clinic outside of these times will be automatically receive an answering machine message detailing contact information for out of hours service providers, including emergency

Patients contacting the clinic via telephone will initially speak to our reception staff. Our reception staff will confirm each patient's identification using 3 identification methods. Our reception staff will also utilise the appropriate triage training and materials available to them. Although our receptionists are not medically trained, they all undergo Triage Training for Reception Staff. You will be asked if your call is an emergency and may be advised to call the ambulance or attend the emergency department.

If it is not an emergency, they will be given the earliest appointment available with the doctor of your choice where possible or any available doctor to appropriately triage the patient's query.

Patients requesting to speak directly to a doctor will be asked further questions regarding their query to appropriately direct their call or offer a more appropriate solution e.g., providing the patient with a telephone consultation.

If a patient is required to be placed on hold, they will first be asked if their call is an emergency. If not, the patient is placed on hold. If the call concerns an emergency the call will be dealt with immediately.

Fax

Faxes received are received either by paper or are imported to our computer system automatically. All faxes that relate to patients are imported into each patient's file. The patient's doctor is notified that this correspondence has been received and the doctor will then mark the appropriate action to be taken. Urgent faxes are brought to the immediate doctor's attention and actioning according to the doctors' instructions. Faxes not related to patients are provided to the staff member they are addressed for appropriate follow up.

Email

Email is utilised in our practice from time to time. Patients should be advised that email is not a secure form of communication and the information within the email may be accessed by someone other than the intended recipient. Emails may occur directly with a patient or may occur between two treating health professionals regarding a patient.

Patients may consent to the use email communication either expressly by advising our reception staff, in the new patient form, or notifying their doctor that they consent to email communication. Patients may also consent to the use of email communication impliedly, by initiating email communication with us it will be implied that the patient has consented to a response being provided by email.

Emails are regularly checked by reception staff, however they are not continuously monitored and should not be used in emergency situations or for cancelling and rescheduling appointments. All urgent communication should be directed to us by telephone. Patients can expect a response to an email within 4 business days.

SMS

SMS messages are sent to patients for a variety of health management purposes. Patients may elect to opt out of receiving SMS communication from the clinic.

Common SMS messages that are sent include:

Recalls:

Patients who need to make a non-urgent follow up appointment concerning their results/correspondence may receive an SMS notifying them of this. Patients then have the option to book an appointment online or call the clinic directly to book.

Appointment Reminders:

A SMS reminder is sent the day prior to patients with appointments. This SMS asks that patients respond and confirm their appointments by return SMS. This integrates into our appointment book and automatically cancels any cancelled appointments.

Health Reminders:

A SMS reminder may be sent to patients to notify them of any ongoing health care follow up that they may need to arrange including care plans, health assessments, cervical screenings etc.

Clinic Updates:

A SMS may be sent to patients to notify them of updates to our clinic including new GP's commencing or the release of the current Flu Vaccine.

Our reception staff will often ask you to confirm your mobile phone number to ensure our records stay up to date. Patients are to be aware that if their phones are accessible to others, the information we send via SMS may be accessible to others also.

Post

Letters are sent to patients to invite them to participate in health campaigns including The Bone Bus. Letters are also sent in the event that our reception staff are unable to contact a patient in relation to a recall or reminder, if other communication pathways fail.

We receive incoming mail daily on weekdays. In the event the mail is related to a patient this is imported into the patients file and the doctor is to action appropriately. Otherwise, incoming mail is directed to the addressee.

Website

Our clinic's website is updated regularly. Patients can find information regarding our clinic on our website including contact details, location details, GP and staff member details, details of the services we provide and our fees.

Facebook

Our Facebook provides updates regarding our clinic and other health care promotions relevant to our patients. It is not intended to provide medical advice. Comments are switched off for our posts and patients are not encouraged to engage with our clinic via Facebook.

Reception staff awaiting responses from clinical team members at the end of their shifts are to hand over the query to another reception staff member for follow up & notify the clinical team member of the same.

In the event that the reception staff are unable to determine the urgency of the query, advice should be sought from the Practice Manager or Practice Nurse.

All relevant communication with patients is recorded in the patients file and the advice that has been given is also record.