

Communications Policy – Carlingford Medical Clinic

372 Pennant Hills Rd, Carlingford. 2118

Current as of: August 2025

Introduction

At Carlingford Medical Clinic we pride ourselves on the high caliber of customer service we provide, especially in-patient security, confidentiality, and right to privacy, dignity and respect. We recognize that all incoming telephone calls are the principal method for any initial and subsequent communications between our patients and any other persons to this practice. The telephone as a vital and integral tool for creating a positive first impression, displaying a caring, confident attitude and acting as a reassuring resource for our patients and others.

Aim

Our aim at Carlingford Medical Clinic is to facilitate optimal communication opportunities with our patients. All our Team Members be mindful of the message they take, the correct details of the message and that they are respecting the privacy of that patient.

Pre-answer system

The telephone system we have at the Carlingford Medical Clinic has already recorded messages that the patients hear prior to the call ringing in the Practice and it relays if the “Call is an Emergency” to then dial 000.

Answering calls

The person answering any telephone enquiries is considered the “Face and Voice” of the Practice. Our practice team try to obtain adequate information from the patient to assess whether the call is an emergency before placing the caller ‘on hold’. It is important for patients telephoning our practice to have the urgency of their needs determined promptly.

All staff members use three approved forms of identification for identifying patients over the phone, so that information is given to the right person.

- Family name and given names
 - Date of birth
 - Gender (as identified by the patient)
 - Address
 - Patient health record number, where it exists
 - Individual Healthcare Identifier
- * A Medicare number is not an approved identifier**

Document in each patient’s health record when:

- team members have attempted to contact (e.g. left a phone message) or successfully contacted the patient
- a patient contacts the practice, the reason for the contact, and the advice and information the patient was given.

We use a system called “CHECK CONTACT DETAILS – CCD” which is a prompt on each Reception Computer to remind the staff.

Dealing with patients on the telephone

Courtesy is to be shown to all callers and allow them to be heard; every call should be considered important. Some patients may be anxious, in pain or distracted by their own or a family member or friend’s medical condition and hence may not always be as polite as they should. Staff are trained to acknowledge and be aware of this and to act accordingly in a professional and courteous manner.

Confidentiality

Team members are mindful of confidentiality requirements to ensure patient names or clinical discussions about patients are not openly stated over the telephone when within earshot of other patients or visitors. Sensitive Information phone calls must be conducted in the back room, away from the waiting room, to maintain privacy.

Relaying messages

This is done via our internal messaging system on the computer. Best Practice Software. The message is sent to the relevant GP/Practice member and linked to a patient file, so it is recorded the reason for the contact and if any advice or information was given to the patient.

Patient messages taken for follow-up by a general practitioner or other practice team members are documented for their attention and action or, in their absence, for the designated person who is responsible for that absent team members' workload. When an answer has been received it will be then relayed to the patient and documented that this message has been actioned in the patient's medical record in BP and the result of that enquiry.

If a message is left by one of the Practice staff, then it will be recorded in the patient's medical record so that if that patient rings the Practice, then whomever answers the telephone will know exactly what the message was about and can help with the enquiry.

Flowchart for delivering of messages

- ❖ Receptionist first answers the call "with a smile in her voice"
- ❖ The receptionist identifies the patient using 3 forms of identification **(Medicare card is not an identifier)**
 - First name or surname
 - D.O.B
 - Current address
- ❖ Is the call an Emergency?
 - Call triple 000
- ❖ A prompt is used on every computer "CCD – Correct Contact Details" to remind staff to also check for any patient updates including email address, phone numbers and Emergency/Next of Kin contacts.
- ❖ Message is taken and relays that she will endeavor to have an answer to the question as soon as possible.
- ❖ The message is delivered via our internal system in 'Best Practice' to the relevant person
- ❖ Relevant staff will then discuss the message and relay the answer to the enquiry.
- ❖ The given message will be documented and relayed back to the patient

Important reminders

No staff member at the Carlingford Medical Clinic will give out any information unless authorised to do so
This includes:

- Any staff members personal details
- Advice, Test results/investigations

WE ENCOURAGE ALL PATIENTS TO COME BACK FOR AN APPOINTMENT IF THEY WISH TO DISCUSS ANY OF THEIR HEALTH ISSUES.

This communications policy is reviewed with ongoing training regularly.