

## The Vale of Neath Practice

### **Confidentiality Policy**

The basis, on which a General Practice operates, is one of trust. That trust is between the doctor and the patient. It means that any information provided by a patient to a doctor is privileged and cannot be revealed to a third party. Without trust, there will be no exchange of information and illnesses and medical problems will go untreated.

The nature of the work in a modern Practice requires an array of administrative staff to manage the day-to-day processing of patient information. Information may come directly from the patient or may come via a hospital laboratory as the outcome from tests performed on samples provided by the patient. The trust that is inherent in the relationship between the doctor and patient extends to cover all members of staff that work in the Practice, irrespective of the role an individual may perform. The requirement for confidentiality is the same for the nurses, the receptionists and the admin team, the secretaries and the cleaners – no person is exempt.

Any person wishing to be employed by, or work in, the Practice must be prepared to accept and abide by this Confidentiality Policy.

#### **Policy Statement:**

- a) All information relating to a specific patient must be protected from access by any unauthorised third party.
- b) Information contained in patient files, on letters from hospitals and laboratories or contained in the computer records of the clinical system may not be read by, or communicated by any means to, any unauthorised person.
- c) Any information found, discovered, overheard or otherwise coming into the possession of a member of staff or person working in the Practice may not reveal that information to any third party, whether within the Practice or outside.
- d) Unless authorised, no person may read the notes in a patient file or on the computerised record of the patient file nor may they disclose any such information contained therein.
- e) Unless authorised, no person may pass on information contained in a patient file or on the computerised record of the patient file to the patient themselves.
- f) Information displayed on notice boards within the Staff areas of the Practice, relating to specific patients, should be treated the same as any information contained in the patient record and may not be disclosed to any third party.
- g) No information about medication, treatment or drugs prescribed for a patient may be disclosed to any other person, unless authorised by a doctor.
- h) Any conversations held by the doctors, in the staff room or elsewhere, relating to specific patients must be treated the same as recorded information in the files or computer system, and any information inadvertently overheard must not be repeated to any other person.
- i) Any student working in the Practice, as part of work experience, should be aware that there might be occasions when the file for a relative, friend or acquaintance comes to their notice. If this is in the course of performing a directed task, the

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student should advise their supervisor that the person is known to them and should not attempt to carry out any activity in relation to that file. This will ensure that there can be no inadvertent reference to any of the information contained therein and there can be no personal difficulties arising from any information that the file may contain. If the file comes to the student's attention through other means, no attempt to access the information should be made for the above same reasons.

- j) If it is discovered that medical information is discussed outside the normal duties and requirements within the Practice or is discussed outside the Practice, this will be considered to be a breach of confidentiality and will be subject to disciplinary proceedings as described in the contract of employment.
- k) In the event of breach of confidentiality by a student engaged in work experience, it will be considered a serious disciplinary matter and may result in termination of the period of work experience and an official report being submitted to the student's school or college for further action.
- l) Any breach of confidentiality could result in a case being brought to court with potentially severe penalties for the individual if the Practice policy was not fully complied with.
- m) No patient related information may be removed from a patient file or deleted from a computer record without the specific authority or the doctor, nurse, the Practice Manager or Assistant Practice Manager.
- n) No patient related information may be removed from the premises unless authorised to transport such information between the two surgery sites or for other medical or clinical reasons and such action is approved beforehand by a doctor, nurse, the Practice Manager or Assistant Practice Manager.
- o) Any information acquired, learnt or coming to your attention relating to the business of the Practice, whether of an organisational, financial or personal nature, must be treated with the same confidentiality as patient specific information, detailed above.
- p) All aspects of confidentiality contained in this policy document continue throughout the period of employment and forever after the termination of employment. Any official (legal etc) requests for information should be referred to the senior partner, a GP or the Practice Manager before any response is given.

For the avoidance of doubt, all information relating to patients must remain within the Practice and must not be disclosed in any form to any person within the Practice or in the wider community. Treat other people's medical information in the same way that you would wish your own personal information to be treated – keep it secret and to yourself.

I confirm that I have read and understand the policy relating to confidentiality and will abide by the restrictions and requirements contained therein.

Signed:.....

Signed: .....  
(Work experience student's Parent/Guardian)

Countersigned: .....  
(Senior Staff member)

Dated:.....