

Internet, Email and Communication Policy – RACF Visiting General Practitioner Services

Queensland Healthcare Pty Ltd

Document Owner	Dr Ash Kriplani (Principal GP / Director)
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Next Scheduled Review	Three Years (or earlier if required)
Applies To	All patients/residents seen by Queensland Healthcare Pty Ltd and any contracted staff supporting care delivery

1. Introduction

This policy outlines the acceptable use of internet, email and other electronic communication systems used by the Practice to support the safe, effective and confidential delivery of medical services within Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs).

As an aged-care-only practice, electronic communication is a critical tool for clinical coordination with aged care providers, pharmacies, pathology services, hospitals, allied health professionals, residents' representatives and families.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- The General Practitioner operating the Practice
- Any contractors or support personnel engaged by the Practice (if applicable)
- All electronic devices used for practice purposes, including laptops, tablets, mobile phones and cloud-based systems, whether practice-owned or personally owned (BYOD)

3. Guiding Principles

Electronic communication must at all times:

- Support safe and timely clinical care
- Protect patient confidentiality and privacy
- Comply with the **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Australian Privacy Principles, and My Health Records Act**
- Be professional, accurate, secure and clinically appropriate
- Recognise the heightened vulnerability of aged care residents and their representatives

4. Acceptable Use

Internet and email access may be used for:

- Clinical communication with RACF staff regarding resident care
- Medication management correspondence with pharmacies
- Ordering and receiving pathology and diagnostic results
- Liaison with hospitals, specialists and allied health providers
- Communication with residents' nominated representatives where appropriate
- Accessing clinical resources, guidelines and professional development
- Practice administration, billing and compliance activities

Limited personal use is permitted where it:

- Is infrequent and brief
- Does not interfere with clinical duties
- Does not compromise cybersecurity or patient confidentiality
- Does not incur additional cost to the Practice
- Does not breach any legislation or professional obligations

5. Electronic Communication with Patients and Representatives

5.1 Consent

Electronic communication (email or SMS) with residents or their nominated representatives occurs **only with documented consent**. Consent includes acknowledgement that:

- Electronic communication carries privacy risks

- Messages may be accessed by unintended recipients
- Email is not suitable for urgent or emergency matters

5.2 Appropriate Use

Electronic communication may be used for:

- Non-urgent administrative matters
- Clarification of care plans already discussed
- Follow-up information where a face-to-face or telehealth consultation is not required

Electronic communication must **not** be used for:

- Emergencies or time-critical clinical decisions
- New or complex medical issues requiring assessment
- Sensitive discussions without prior clinical context

All clinically relevant electronic communications are documented in the resident's medical record.

6. Privacy, Confidentiality and Security

The Practice will take reasonable steps to ensure:

- Emails containing clinical information are sent only to verified recipients
- Sensitive information is shared using secure or encrypted systems where available
- Devices are protected by passwords, PINs or biometric security
- Public or unsecured Wi-Fi networks are avoided for clinical communication
- Lost or stolen devices are reported and managed promptly

7. Unacceptable Use

Internet or email systems must not be used to:

- Transmit offensive, harassing, defamatory or inappropriate content
- Access illegal, obscene or inappropriate websites
- Share patient information without lawful authority or consent
- Conduct unrelated business or commercial activities

- Engage in gambling, gaming or illegal activities
- Send bulk, chain or unsolicited emails

8. Monitoring and Accountability

All electronic communications conducted in the course of providing medical services constitute official practice records.

The Practice reserves the right to review electronic communications if required for:

- Cybersecurity incidents
- Privacy breaches
- Legal or regulatory investigations

Inappropriate use may result in corrective action and, where applicable, notification to relevant authorities.

9. Email Disclaimer

All outgoing practice emails include a confidentiality disclaimer stating that the message is intended only for the named recipient and may contain confidential medical information.

10. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed periodically to ensure ongoing compliance with:

- RACGP Standards
- Australian privacy and health records legislation
- Aged care regulatory requirements
- To be reviewed at least every 3 years.