**Practice Management – Communications Policy & Procedure:**

**when patients contact the practice**

Our practice manages telephone calls, telephone messages and electronic messages from patients. The practice has a policy in place to ensure that staff and patients are aware of the communications policy at Jurien Bay Medical Centre.

**Policy**

Jurien Bay Medical endeavours to provide patients with timely advice about their clinical care via the telephone as a primary point of contact. The urgency of a patients needs are determined promptly and handled appropriately. We aim to communicate effectively over the telephone and use simple, straight forward language that is easy to understand. It is imperative that we check to see that patients have understood what has been said to them during the phone call to avoid miscommunication.

Electronic communication, such as email and fax, is another useful and alternative point of access for our patients when contacting the practice. Patients have the option to contact or be contacted by our practice through electronic means such as email or fax. Patients must agree to the use of electronic forms of communication by signing a patient consent form. They are also informed of the associated risks and potential breaches of privacy and confidentiality which may occur when using electronic forms of communication. Our practice adheres to the Australian Privacy Principles (APP’s), The Privacy Act 1988 and The Freedom of Information Act 1992. Any form of electronic communication between the patient and the practice, including any action taken in response to the message/s are documented in the patients’ medical record. Our practice aims to ensure that all messages are responded to in a timely manner.

At Jurien Bay Medical Centre, our aim is to facilitate optimal communication opportunities with all patients. Patients who do not speak or read English, speak another language or have special communication needs are always offered the choice of using the assistance of a language service to communicate with the GP’s or clinical team members

**Procedure:**

**Communicating by telephone**

All telephone calls are answered by a member of the practice who must adhere to the following guidelines:

* Staff follow the practice booking system for all patient appointments
* Before any calls are placed on hold staff must first ask if the matter is an emergency
* Staff follow the practice triage system for patients requesting urgent appointments
* Staff make sure the patient is correctly identified by using three of the approved patient identifiers (eg: surname & given names, date of birth, address)
* Staff are mindful of confidentiality and the patients right to privacy at all times. No names are openly stated over the telephone within earshot of other patients and/or visitors
* Staff are aware of each Doctors policy on accepting or returning calls

**Communicating by electronic means**

Our practice email account for patients and the general public is info@jurienbaymedical.com.au No consulting or medical advice is given over email; this must be communicated face-to-face by a medical practitioner or other appropriate health professional, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The practice email account is checked regularly by the receptionist on duty throughout the business day. Email messages are forwarded to the appropriate team member for a response within 24-48hrs.

Jurien Bay Medical uses SMS messaging to remind patients of their upcoming appointments. No medical or personal identifying information is used in these messages. It is the patients’ responsibility to contact the practice and follow up on the message/appointment reminder.

**Informing the clinical team of communications**

The practice clinical team is informed of all communications which require their attention and action. This communication will be documented in the team members appointment book/screen, patient record and/or Doctors pigeon hole. All significant and important telephone conversations or electronic communications, including after hours contacts, medical emergencies and urgent queries are documented.

*The log records:*

* Name and phone number of the patient/caller
* Date and time of the call
* Urgency of the call
* Important facts concerning the patients’ condition
* The advice or information received form the Doctor
* Details of any follow up appointment

*All documented communications are provided to the staff member on the day of receipt and must be responded to within a timely manner (24-48hrs)*

**Communicating with patients with special needs**

A contact list of translator and interpreter services and services for patients with a disability is maintained, updated regularly and readily available to all staff at reception. These include:

* National Relay Service 133 677
* AUSLAN Services 1300 AUSLAN
* Translation and Interpreter Services 1300 131 450