

Email Policy



Intelligent Ageing

1. Introduction

Intelligent Ageing recognises that its employees, contractors and other team members require access to email for the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients. Intelligent Ageing supports the right of staff to have access to reasonable personal use of the email communications in the workplace using the devices and networks provided by the practice.

2. Purpose and Objectives

This Policy sets out the guidelines for acceptable use of email by the practice team, contractors and other staff of Intelligent Ageing. Emails are used primarily to assist the team in carrying out their duties of employment.

3. Scope

The Email Policy applies to the practice team, contractors and other staff of Intelligent Ageing who access email on privately-owned and practice-owned devices including, but not limited to, desk phones, smartphones, laptops, desktop computers, iPads and other tablet devices to perform their work.

Email use is permitted and encouraged where this supports the goals and objectives of Intelligent Ageing. All practice team members, contractors and other staff must adhere to this policy.

Violation of this policy could result in legal and / or disciplinary action, termination of employment, or the relevant practice team member, contractor or other staff being held personally liable for damages caused by any violations of this policy.

All employees are required to confirm they have understood and agree to abide by this Policy.

- Infringes or breaches another person's rights (including intellectual property rights) or privacy, or misuses the practice's or another person's confidential information (e.g. do not submit confidential information relating to our patients, personal information of staff, or information concerning the practice's business operations that have not been made public).
- Is materially damaging or could be materially damaging to the practice's reputation or image, or another individual.
- Is in breach of any of the practice's policies or procedures.
- Use social media to send unsolicited commercial electronic messages, or solicit other users to buy or sell products or services or donate money.
- Impersonate another person or entity (e.g. by pretending to be someone else or another practice employee or other participant when you submit a contribution to social media) or by using another's registration identifier without permission.
- Tamper with, hinder the operation of, or make unauthorised changes to the social media sites.
- Knowingly transmit any virus or other disabling feature to or via the practice's social media account, or use in any email to a third party, or the social media site.

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4. Email Use

4.1. Policy

Our practice is mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details, they may not be proficient in communicating via email and patient consent needs to be obtained before engaging in electronic communication via email. Communication with patients via email is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy.

4.2. Procedure

Whilst not encouraged, our practice allows patients an opportunity to obtain advice or information related to their care by email, but only where the general practitioner determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary and that communication by email is suitable. Our practice will only provide information that is of a general, non-urgent nature and will not initiate email communication (other than SMS appointment reminders) with patients. Any email communication received from patients is also used as a method to verify the contact details we have recorded on file are correct and up-to-date.

Before obtaining and documenting the patient's consent, patients are fully informed through information contained in the Practice's Privacy Policy of the risks associated with email communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient.

When an email message is sent or received during a person's duties, that message is a business communication and therefore constitutes an official record. Patients are informed of any costs to be incurred because of the electronic advice or information being provided, and all electronic contact with patients is recorded in their health record.

All members of the practice team are made aware of our policy regarding email communication with patients during induction and are reminded of this policy on an ongoing basis. They are made aware that email communications could be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others. Each member of the practice team holds full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox, and they are expected to utilise this communication tool in an acceptable manner. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Limiting the exchange of personal emails.
- Refraining from responding to unsolicited or unwanted emails.
- Deleting hoaxes or chain emails.
- Email attachments from unknown senders are not to be opened.
- Virus checking all email attachments.
- Maintaining appropriate language within electronic communications.
- Ensuring any personal opinions are clearly indicated as such.

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- Confidential information (e.g. patient information) must be encrypted.

Our practice reserves the right to check an individual's email account as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by members of the practice team. Inappropriate use of the email facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.

The practice uses an email disclaimer notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the practice stating:

"PRIVELEGED – PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

This email and any files transmitted with it are intended solely for the use of the addressee(s) and may contain information which is confidential or privileged. If you receive this email and you are not the addressee or responsible for delivery of the email to the addressee(s), please disregard the contents of the email, delete the email and notify the sender immediately."

All members of the practice team and contractors and other staff may use email provided by Intelligent Ageing for work, and work-related purposes; for limited personal use; and for more extended personal use in specific circumstances.

Limited Personal Use

Limited personal is permitted provided it:

- Is infrequent and brief,
- Does not interfere with the duties of the team member,
- Does not interfere with the operation of the practice,
- Does not compromise the security of the practice,
- Does not impact on the general electronic storage capacity,
- Does not decrease the practice's network performance (eg. sending of large email attachments, downloading videos),
- Does not incur additional expense for the practice,
- Does not violate any legislation,
- Does not compromise any confidentiality requirements of the practice.

Examples of what might be considered reasonable personal use:

- Sending a brief personal email, similar to making a brief phone call

Unacceptable Internet, Email and Social Media Use

Practice team members, contractors and other staff may not use Intelligent Ageing's email to:

- Create or exchange messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene or threatening.
- Exchange any confidential or sensitive information held by the practice,
- Create, store or exchange information in violation of copyright laws,
- Create or exchange advertisements, solicitations, chain letters or other unsolicited bulk email.

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Staff and Patients Using Email / SMS or Other Forms of Electronic Messaging

Staff and patients should be aware that it is not possible to guarantee that electronic communications will be private. All personal health information or sensitive information sent by email must be securely encrypted.

Patients can request information to be sent via email (without encryption) however, patients must be informed that this form of communication is not secure. Consent must be obtained from the patient to release information in this format.

When an email is sent or received in the course of a person's duties, that message is a business communication and therefore constitutes an official record.

Internal or external parties, including patients, may send electronic messages. Messages from patients or those of clinical significance require a response to confirm receipt and should be documented in the client medical record, if appropriate.

All staff members should be aware that electronic communications could, depending on the technology, be forwarded, intercepted, printed, or stored by others.

Staff members have full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox and are expected to utilise this communication tool in an acceptable manner.

Policy Review Statement

This Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the current processes and procedures of Intelligent Ageing and current legislation requirements.