5.10 Complaints

Policy

In our practice, customer satisfaction and patient experience is important to us. All patients have the right to complain if they feel the service, they received did not meet their expectations.

We have a complaints resolution process which all staff can describe, and we also make the contact details for the state or territory health complaints agencies readily available to patients if we are unable to resolve their concerns ourselves. All complaints are attempted to be resolved at a practice level. Only if a satisfactory outcome is not reached should the complaint be directed to the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC).

Where possible patients and others are encouraged to raise any concerns directly with the Practice Manager who is trained to handle and respond to complaints. We believe most complaints can be responded to and resolved at the time the patient or other people makes them known to us.

Patients have the opportunity to remain anonymous if requested. Our practice complies with relevant privacy legislation when responding and handling complaints.

All staff should acknowledge complaints as they arise and refer them directly to the Practice Manager or the Principal GP if the practice Manager is not in the office. Depending on the nature of the complaint and advice received from medical indemnity company, complaints are recorded and actioned within central complaints register. A copy is placed in the patient's medical record if the complaint is related to patient care.

All clinical staff and the practice manger are aware of their professional and legal obligations regarding the mandatory reporting of unprofessional conduct. Contact is made with the GPs MDO and advice sought on the appropriate action in the event a complaint relates to clinical care.

Procedure

Patients and others have opportunities to register their complaints verbally to the Practice Manager or via email to the Practice manager or in writing a letter, or via our suggestion box. Patients should feel free to complain anonymously if desired.

All staff are aware of the complaints management process and are trained to respond appropriately.

When receiving complaints staff should keep in mind the following in order to minimise further patient anxiety and hostility, possible leading to litigation:

- handle all complaints seriously, no matter how trivial they may seem.
- verbal complaints made in person should be addressed in a private area of the practice where possible.
- address the patient's expectations regarding how they want the matter resolved.
- assure the patient that their complaint will be investigated and the matter not overlooked.
- offer the patients the opportunity to complete a formal complaint form. (They may accept or decline).

All patients are made aware through the Practice Information Sheet and signage in the practice waiting area, of their right to lodge a complaint and how they can make a complaint. The HCCC contact details are also available on the Practice Information Sheet.

It is the responsibility of *the Practice Manager* collect, investigate and handle complaints. The practice takes the following steps to handle complaints:

- When a patient indicates they would like to make a complaint, ask if they would like to complete a form.
- If verbal, take the patient to a private area and document the details of their complaint. Be sure to ask the patient if they would like to remain anonymous or not.
- Notify the team member responsible for complaints handling and record the complaint in the register.

- The person responsible for complaints handling should acknowledge receipt of the complaint either via telephone or a letter, to advise the patient of the work you will be conducting to investigate the complaint.
- If the complaint is of a clinical nature, contact the GPs MDO for advice and appropriate action.
- Investigate the complaint and work with the patient to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.
- Discuss the complaint at a staff meeting or clinical meeting (if applicable).
- Notify the patient or the whole patient population, of the outcome or relevant changes to the practice as a result of the complaint.
- Record details of the investigation and outcome in the complaints register.

If the matter cannot be resolved advise the patient about how to contact the Health Complaints commissioner.

The National Privacy Commissioner is able to receive complaints concerning privacy issues. Complaints here will have a response within 28 days.

National Privacy Commissioner
Privacy hotline 1300 363 992.
GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001
http://www.privacy.gov.au/complaints

Members of the public may make a notification to Australian Health practitioner regulation agency (http://www.ahpra.gov.au/) (AHPRA) about the conduct, health or performance of a practitioner or the health of a student. Practitioners, employers and education providers are all mandated by law to report notifiable conduct relating to a registered practitioner or student to AHPRA.