

Communications Policy

Our goal is to provide our patients with the best possible patient experience including when communicating with our practice. Patients are able to communicate with Rotem Medical via both phone and electronic messaging channels (email & SMS). Electronic communication with patients must be conducted with appropriate regard to the privacy and confidentiality of the patient's health information.

Privacy and confidentiality training is provided as part of the new practice team members induction program; with regular updates and training provided annually. It is the responsibility of the Principal GP to ensure all training and training records is completed, current and stored in PracticeHub.

Managing telephone calls, telephone messages, and/or electronic messages

Effective handling of patient phone calls is important. As the first point of contact, reception staff refer to the triage support guide to ensure patient needs and concerns are addressed appropriately. Receptionists may need to ask additional questions to determine the most suitable care and the appropriate timeframe.

To facilitate this effective phone communication, reception staff are trained to:

- always gain permission from callers before placing them on hold. This gives the caller the opportunity to advise if they have an emergency.
- use three approved forms of identification for identifying patients over the phone (i.e. full name, DOB & address).
- rate the urgency of a call and manage as per the Triage Support Guide-refer [Patient Triage](#)
- advise the patient the process for responding to/returning their call on our Terms and Conditions.

All members of our practice team are aware of and have received training in the importance of documenting in the patient's health record:

- all attempts to contact the patient
- all contacts from the patient
- the reason for the contact, and
- the information given by and to the patient.

Documentation of communication is written in the "visit notes" section of the patient file under "non visit". Training provided also includes the information and advice practice team members can and cannot give to patients over the phone or electronically.

Telephone communication is an important communication tool for our practice. Our procedure for managing incoming calls is:

- answer within 2-3 rings
- speak clearly and precisely with a smile in your voice
- think about what you are saying and mean it
- address the caller using their name
- if placing the caller on hold, always ask whether their call is urgent, wait for the answer and if urgent continue with the call, or place on hold
- when resuming the on-hold call, thank the caller for holding and continue with the call.

In our practice, the procedure for healthcare providers returning telephone calls is to schedule them at the healthcare providers discretion. Requests from patients to speak directly with a doctor are generally not transferred at the time of the call. This helps minimise interruptions, as doctors are usually consulting with other patients. Doctors may take calls when their schedule allows. Reception staff will ask for a brief explanation of the reason for the call to decide whether the doctor needs to be interrupted or whether a message should be passed on for a return call. Callbacks may occur later in the day or once the doctor has finished consulting. If clinically significant information is discussed, a note will be added to the patient's record.

We maintain our patients' privacy and confidentiality in telephone communication by:

- transferring the call to a private area where the conversation cannot be overheard
- not disclosing personal health information to anyone other than the patient. If an outside query is pursued, we refer the call to appropriate person or leave message on Best Practice message system.

SMS and email communication

With appropriate authorisation our practice uses both SMS and email to communicate with our patients. Email is not a secure method of communication, and we do not use it to send personal or sensitive information to patients without their consent. A disclaimer noting that email is not a secure mode of communication is located in our disclaimer in our email signature and is also in our automatic email reply.

Management of email communication refer Core Standard 6 Information management, [Email use \(C6.4 F\)](#)

Authorisation for SMS contact requires:

- patient signature in the appropriate section of our New Patient Registration form (scanned to patient file).

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- confirmation of mobile number at each visit.

The patient is informed the SMS:

- does not to include sensitive health information (e.g., pathology results)
- is included in their health record

Our practice SMS reminder system:

- records the reminder in the patient file
- allows the practice to access the record of the SMS reminders sent
- the practice has access to the patient responses to the SMS reminders
- the practice can identify an SMS reminder sent to a patient for a flagged recall or reminder and the response from the patient to ensure appropriate action is taken or when there is no responses by the patient.