



PRINCIPAL [MEDICAL]

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PRINCIPAL [MEDICAL]

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PRINCIPAL [DENTAL]

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Communication Policy

Communication policy of Estella Medical & Dental Centre (EMDC) is designed to provide a platform for effective communication amongst our stakeholders. This policy and any other written communication will be in plain English.

EMDC will ensure that General practitioners, allied health, reception staff and nurses are fully and accurately informed in a timely way of all relevant activities, policies, issues and plans to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.

EMDC will monitor and improve as necessary its procedures for communication. The principle of a two-way flow of information and discussion will be incorporated in communication procedures, providing for feedback and sharing of opinions.

EMDC Communication policy supports the RACGP General practice patient charter.

Communication Principles.

Workplace communication will be conducted free of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

Workplace communication will be respectful of confidentiality and privacy.

Workplace communication will be polite and courteous.

Social communication amongst staff is encouraged but not to the detriment of our patients.

Staff and patients are to be addressed by name. Using titles is at the preference of the individual (e.g. Mrs Smith or Mary).

Information will be communicated using options such as, but not necessarily limited to:

- Regular staff meetings – including minutes of meetings
- One to one meetings
- Email/Best Practice/ messages
- Phone messaging
- Staff newsletters
- Practice activity board (best practice has this facility on its appointment book)
- Notice boards
- Policies
- Practice Manual

Preference will be given to face to face communication or the telephone for patient clinical matters.

EMDC will use medical interpreters in the first instance for patients without English speaking



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skills. The use of patients' relatives and friends is acceptable if expressed wish of the patient and the problems is minor. The use of children as interpreters is not encouraged. Doctors who are able to converse with patients in a language other than English are encouraged to do so.

Patient communication.

When communicating results via telephone, the person responsible for giving the results is to ensure patient is correctly identified using three patient identifiers. Results advised to be recorded in patient notes.

Communication with patients via email will be at patient discretion. Confidential and/or information of a sensitive nature will not be communicated via email. Patients are able to access the practice by email for non-urgent matters. Emails are not an alternative to a consultation. Recalls and reminders for patients may be communicated via SMS message. Messages must be general in nature.

Patient information and specialist referrals may be forwarded via facsimile, these will be confirmed as received via telephone call.

Important patient communications are to be recorded in patient file, including method of communication, example telephone, email, consultation.

Patients who present to the practice without an appointment will be triaged according to policy.

Patient communication Via e-mail

At Estella Medical and Dental Centre we may receive e-mails from patients, other health professionals, Representatives and medical supply companies. The general e-mail used is admin@estellamedicaldental.com.au and this is monitored on a daily basis. All our reception staff have access and are responsible for management and distributions of the e-mails where required.

Any non-confidential, general information e-mail received can be managed and responded to by reception.

Any personal health enquiry should be triaged via clinical staff either by the nurses or GPs. A copy of this e-mail should be made available in the patients' medical file and the encounter of e-mail noted in patients file by the reception staff dealing with the enquiry.

The clinical member of staff will normally respond via telephone to allow us to verify your identity and verify the enquiry. We can then further respond you via e-mail if you wish to at your own risk.



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Any complaint or feedback received will be directly forwarded on to the Practice Manager to attend to as per the complaints and feedback policy.

We do not encourage the use of e-mail to provide personal or confidential information as we do not use an encrypted e-mail service. For this reason, we discourage health providers from sending emails to us with personal information about patients, and we discourage patients from sending emails to us with their own personal information.

Responsibilities.

Practice Manager Communication Role & Responsibility

- The conduit for communications to & from Practice Principals
- Notify reception staff of unplanned absences of staff members.
- Notify reception staff of planned absences of clinical staff.
- Record planned absences on appointment book for the benefit of all staff, ensuring patient care and reduction of appointment changes. This task may be allocated to ONE receptionist only, ensuring information is current and accurate.
- Advise all staff members of changes to policies and procedures, this should be delivered verbally and where possible, followed with written communication confirming same.
- Facebook and website pages provide accurate information on EMDC and negative comments are appropriately acknowledged and responded to. This role may be delegated.

Reception Communication Role & Responsibility

Reception Staff are the hub of communication at EMDC. Reception staff through the management of appointment books and telephones, are the first line of contact for our patients.

- Answer phone using "Estella Medical, Dental & Fast Braces" in their greeting.
- Deliver messages promptly – if Dr/Nurse unavailable, provide message via Best Practice ® message system or email.
- Transfer calls, with permission, to Doctor from: other Doctors, pharmacists, Practice Manager and family.
- Speak in hushed tones with patients when discussing personal information.
- Forward emails sent via admin@estellamedicaldental.com.au to the relevant recipient daily.
- Ensure messages via Best Practice are actioned daily
- Document in patient notes any contact made with patient via phone for the discussion of results or request of Doctor to see patient.
- Communicate with Practice Manager of any concerns that are not able to be resolved or don't fit into current policies or procedures.



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Nurse Communication role & responsibility.

For a nurse, the ability to communicate is a vital part of their role. Nurses speak to people of varying educational, cultural & social backgrounds and must do so in an effective, caring and professional manner.

- The nurse will introduce themselves to their patients. When speaking with patients, nurses will speak slowly, clearly, avoid using slang, remember their audience, stop & listen, reflect and be mindful of body language. Nurses will be aware of health literature levels when communicating with patients.
- Nurses will ensure patients have an understanding of any medical intervention performed as well as confirming consent.
- Nurses will document interactions with their patient on medical record.
- Nurses will ensure relevant health information is relayed to the Doctor in a timely manner via patient notes, electronic message, telephone or face to face discussion.

Doctor communication role & responsibility

- Notify practice manager of any planned leave absences as soon as they are known.
- Notify reception staff if running late to work to facilitate patient satisfaction and workflow.
- Notify practice manager where appointments currently made are to be moved in the event of absence, either planned or unplanned, that will suit the needs to the Doctor and the practice.
- Provide notification to reception staff of patient's future appointment requirements including a timeframe for the appointment.
- Notify reception staff, and document accordingly any patient who is no longer welcome to attend EMDC.

Practice Principals communication role & responsibility

- Notify practice manager of changes to policies & procedures.
- Conduct regular meetings with minutes recorded of discussions.
- Advise other practice principals of decisions made that may affect the running of the practice to ensure continuity of business.



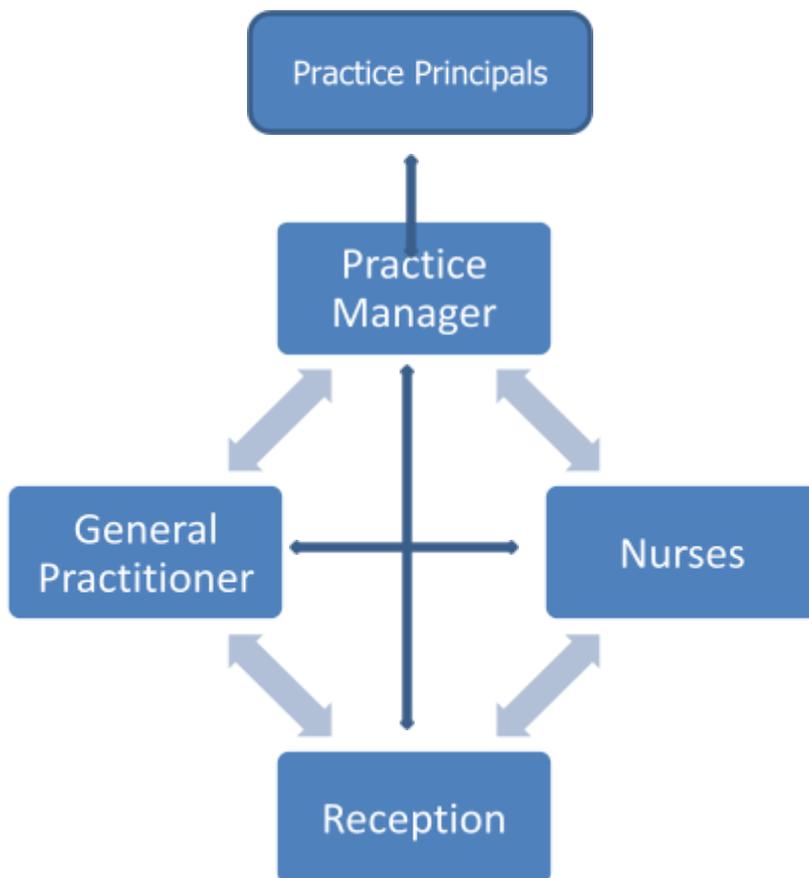
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Communication workflow



Reference is also made to this policy in the Estella Medical & Dental Centre procedures and policy manual of 2022 – 2.1.1.

Policy date: May 2022
Policy Review: May 2023