

The Pioneer Health Group values good internal and external communication and believes it is a critical element of creating a successful, reputable and highly engaged organisation. Communication plays an essential role in the conduct of our business, and how our employees communicate reflects both on the individual and the organisation.

## Purpose

This policy aims to provide team members with clear standards and processes in relation to the variety of communication methods and purposes employed throughout the practice.

Communications Methods:

- Email
- Phone
- SMS
- Letters
- Fax
- Website
- Facebook/Instagram
- Brochures

When communicating with patients, regardless of the method, three approved forms of identification are required prior to the release of any information

## Email

The Pioneer Health Group has the objective of enhancing and streamlining internal and external communications to ensure that information disseminated to staff is relevant, easy to access, accurate, and appropriate in both content and quality.

Use of email to patients and/or external providers must be in adherence to the practice Email Policy.

## Phone

Phone communication represents the majority of communication with practice patients. The Pioneer Health Group aims to provide a high quality of customer service through our phone communication method. To this end:

- All phone calls are to be answered as soon as possible.
- Patients requesting to speak to the GP are advised that a message can be taken and emailed to the GP. Where possible, action is taken by the medical reception team to reduce the need for a GP phone call to patients.
- Patients requesting or requiring to speak to a nurse are transferred to the “float nurse” phone. If this is not answered, a message is taken.
- When a patient contacts the practice, team members are to record the reason for contact, and the advice and information given to the patient in the patients medical record.
- All contact attempts relating to patient results, recalls or reminders are recorded in the patient record.

## SMS

The Pioneer Health Group has a stand-alone SMS Policy that describes in detail the process and uses of SMS messaging by the practice. This policy should be read in conjunction with the SMS Policy. In summary:

- SMS messages are used for standard automatic appointment reminders and result notification for the most part
- SMS messages should not be used to reschedule appointments unless all other avenues have been exhausted
- SMS messages sent requesting patients to contact the practice should not be used unless all other avenues have been exhausted
- SMS messages sent by the practice should not include information that relates to the patient’s health or medical condition.
- SMS messages sent that use text outside of the established practice templates require approval from the Management team.

## Letters

Whilst most correspondence is received and sent via other methods, letters to patients still occur and are a secure and appropriate method for follow up of outstanding results and recalls.

## Fax

Fax is primarily used for the safe transmission of patient health information between specialists, allied health, pathology providers and other healthcare professionals. Secure email via Best Practice is, however, the preferred method of transmission for these communications.

## Website

Pioneer Health Albany maintains a website at [www.pioneerhealth.com.au](http://www.pioneerhealth.com.au). This website is monitored and new content is routinely added to the site

Patients are encouraged to utilise the website to book appointments online and to find many resources relating to the services provided at the practice.

## Facebook/Instagram

Pioneer Health Albany has a facebook page and an instagram page as a modern platform to connect and communicate with our patients and the community. The facebook and instagram pages are managed by a dedicated team member and all content on the pages are approved by the Communications Coordinator prior to posting. The messenger and review functionality of the pages have been switched off, so to comply with AMA advertising guidelines.

Further information regarding the use of social media by Pioneer Health Albany employees is included in our Social Media Policy.

## Release of Patient Information

In the event that a patient requests the release of their own personal health information to another practice, written consent is required. This consent is usually generated from the new practice, however, if not the Request for Patient Information form should be completed.

In the event of a patient requesting the release of their own personal health information to themselves, approval from their treating doctor is to be obtained first, and recorded in the patients medical record.

In the event of a patient requesting the emailing of their own personal health information the practice's Email Policy is to be adhered to.

In the event a third-party health professional who is participating in the care of a patient requests a patient's personal health information (ie: allied health provider), written or verbal consent must be obtained from the patient. This approval is sought as part of the new patient information form and in most cases, is granted at the time of joining the practice.

## Reference

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Email Policy, Social Media Policy and SMS Policy