

Pioneer Health Albany supports the use of Short Messages Services (SMS) as a means of communication with patients.

## Purpose

- 1 To outline the requirements for using SMS technology to remind patients of upcoming appointments and other messages
- 2 To establish authorisation procedures for the use of SMS technology in practice communications
- 3 To outline what information may and may not be included in an SMS message

## Approved communications

Pioneer Health Albany uses SMS messages for the following purposes only;

- Appointment reminders
- Changes to appointments
- General appointment request
- Result notification
- Recall reminders
- Prescriptions
- EPC voucher information (explicit consent required)
- Pathology form collection

SMS messages are NOT to be sent for the following purposes;

- Sending specific personal health information (unless the patient explicitly consents to this and consent is recorded)

## Consent

### Appointment reminder/Changes to appointments/Appointment request:

Receipt of an appointment reminder via SMS is now an acceptable community standard, and a patient providing a mobile telephone number is deemed to have agreed to that mode of contact. The automated SMS applications utilise numbers stored in the relevant fields of the Best Practice software. Should a patient request not

to be contacted via automated SMS this is to be recorded in the patient record.

Consent is also obtained as part of the new patient form that is completed prior to a patient being seen by a GP at the practice.

### Result Notification/Recall Reminders/Pathology form collection:

Our practice utilises Automed to send SMS messages in relation to results and recalls to our patients.

Patients are routinely asked when making an appointment if they consent to receiving result notification and recall reminders via SMS. If a patient does not consent this is recorded in the patient record.

No specific health information is included in the result notification or recall reminder text.

Consent is also obtained as part of the new patient form that is completed prior to a patient being seen by a GP at the practice.

## Privacy

Pioneer Health Albany's preferred SMS provider, Automed, does not collect or hold mobile numbers or message information, it merely transmits them.

The SMS message should not include information that relates to the patient's health or medical condition, including the proposed treatment, except in circumstances where informed consent has been given to the practice and recorded as such (EPC voucher information only).

The SMS message may include the following information without breaching patient privacy and confidentiality:

- the patient's first name
- the treating GP's name

## Application and approval process

SMS reminders for booked appointments, result notification and recall reminders are sent via the automated system AutoMed.

## SMS Policy (cont.)

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### Exclusions

Certain groups should not be sent SMS appointment reminders.

- **Prisoners**
- **Non-custodial parents**

Pioneer Health Albany is responsible for ensuring the appropriate next of kin's mobile number is inserted into the relevant field in Best Practice.

- **Deceased individuals**

Date of death is manually managed (communicated through GP team to employees) and therefore, unfortunately, there may be a small number of errors. The employee team is to report any complaints to the General Manager for consideration.

- **Children**

Pioneer Health Albany is responsible for ensuring appropriate mobile numbers are inserted into the relevant fields, and that the nominated next of kin is used as a contact number for children.

### Authorisation

Administration team members are authorised to send appointment reminder and appointment changes SMS messages to patients. Simple SMS messages asking the patient to contact the practice is also authorised for use by the administration and nursing team.

Recall and result notification SMS processes are automated through Automed which uses the information that has been entered by GPs and nurses in Best Practice.

### Compliance and Quality Checking

It is the responsibility of Pioneer Health Albany to ensure all SMS messaging is recorded in the patient notes, excluding appointment reminders or changes.

The Best Practice system automatically records SMS contact sent through the Best Practice via any method. To view these messages go to View -> Contact Notes.

Patients are routinely asked at reception, and over the phone when making an appointment, if their mobile phone number on record is correct.