



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTRE

# Privacy and Security of Personal Health Information Guidelines

At Curtin University's Health and Wellness Centre (Centre) the privacy of clients and their personal information is taken very seriously.

The Centre complies with the Australian Privacy Principles, Curtin University's Privacy Statement and relevant codes of ethics and standards governed by professional bodies. The Australian Privacy Principles sets out how personal information should be collected, stored, used and disclosed.

### *Personal information*

Personal information is defined in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) as information or an opinion about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable whether the information or opinion is true or not and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.

Personal health information is a subset of personal information and can include any information collected in providing a health service. This may include medical details, family information, name, address, employment and other demographic data, past medical and social history, current health issues and future medical care, Medicare number, accounts details, medical or personal opinion about a person's health or disability. It includes formal medical records whether written or in electronic form and information held or recorded on any other medium, for example letter, fax or information conveyed verbally.

There are no degrees of privacy. Sometimes details about a person's medical history or other contextual information such as details of a medical appointment can identify that person, even if no name is attached to that information.

### *Staff and student obligations*

All staff and students are informed of the legislative and organisational requirements regarding privacy and information security. To this effect all staff have signed a Confidentiality Agreement at the beginning of their employment at Curtin University which is binding on them even after their employment ceases. Students sign a Confidentiality Declaration at the beginning of their studies with the Faculty of Health Sciences or at the beginning of their clinical rotation. This declaration is binding on the student even after their study is completed.

The Centre has well documented Privacy and Security of Personal Health Information Guidelines and Protocols. Staff and students are made aware of these at induction of employment or commencement of studies and also when updates or changes occur.

### *Client awareness*

Prior to initial assessment, all clients have access to the Centre's policy on Privacy and Security of Personal Health Information. Consent is obtained from each client for the handling of client health information and also for their treatment. These are separate processes which may occur at the same time – but before initial assessment of the client. Clients are advised that they can cease treatment at any time without penalty. They are also advised that they can withhold health information if they so desire. However, if this is the situation, clients are advised that their health care treatment may be influenced by this decision.

### *Quality improvement or clinical audit activities*

Quality improvement or clinical audit activities for the purpose of seeking to improve the quality and delivery of a particular treatment or service is considered to be a valid use of information collected by

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the Centre and is in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

### *Research, publications and teaching purposes*

Curtin University is a leader in health related research and may use client information that does not identify clients for research, publications and teaching purposes. Should information that will identify clients be required, clients will be informed and given the opportunity to 'opt-out' of any involvement without compromising their health care treatment.

### *Use and disclosure of information*

All client information handled by the Centre is private and confidential including what is seen or heard and therefore is not disclosed to family, friends, staff or others without the client's approval or there is a valid reason to do so.

Circumstances where information may be used or disclosed are:

- For administrative purposes within the Centre
- Disclosure to others involved in the client's healthcare treatment including:
  - treating doctors and health professionals,
  - referral to other service providers,
  - written reports and / or letters to GPs and other treating health professionals
  - for medical tests and associated reports to be returned to the Centre.
- Billing purposes eg Medicare, health funds
- Recall or reminder notifications
- For research, teaching and quality assurance activities to improve client care
- To comply with any legislative or regulatory requirement including to enforcement bodies

Information may be used or disclosed without the consent of a client when:

- There exists an immediate and specified risk to the client or to others, or
- There exists a legal obligation to do so, for example court subpoena or valid search warrant

### *Records management*

Client health records are kept in accordance with Curtin University's Recordkeeping Plan, the *State Records Act (WA)* and the current Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority.

### *Access to records*

Requests to access a client's health record may be made in writing to the Clinics Manager at the address below. The Clinics Manager will forward requests to the supervising clinician to determine what material can be released. Copies of reports may be available and charges may apply.

Requests by a third party shall be directed to the Clinics Manager in the first instance and may be released only with the express consent of the client and in consultation with the supervising clinician and in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and Curtin University's Disclosure of Personal Information Procedure.

### *Concerns or complaints*

Any concerns or complaints about the management of personal information can be directed to the Clinics Manager on:

The Clinics Manager  
Health and Wellness Centre  
Building 404  
GPO Box U1987  
Perth WA 6845

Phone: 9266 1717

Email: [curtinclinics404@curtin.edu.au](mailto:curtinclinics404@curtin.edu.au)

All concerns or complaints about the management of personal information will be investigated.