

# Confidentiality Issues – Patient's Leaflet

# Information for Health

*How we use medical information to help everyone*

## What we record

Information about you, your medical treatment, and family background may be recorded, either on paper or in computer files, as part of providing you with health services.

This information is vital to the proper operation of the NHS, and is needed to give you and others the best possible healthcare.

## What you can do

Please read the rest of this leaflet in order to better understand how we use medical information about you. If you would like further information, then see the contacts at the end of the leaflet.

You have choices on how we use your personal information, but will need to contact us for the appropriate documentation.

## How we use your information:

### Your Doctor

Doctors need to make notes about any diagnosis, test results, treatments including drugs prescriptions,

and other information that you may provide, that seems relevant to the treatment of your condition.

We need to keep this information in order to provide proper care for you (for later treatment, or if you should be seen by another doctor) and to allow others to check the treatment that you have received.



Nurses and other health professionals also need access to these records, and will add their own notes, as part of the overall healthcare provision.

Secretaries, receptionists, and other clerical staff need access to some of your records in order to do administrative tasks, such as: booking appointments and communicating with you and other parts of the NHS.

Your doctor may also need to provide information under certain Acts of Parliament (e.g. the Communicable Diseases Act 1978 - which is necessary to prevent the outbreak of certain highly contagious diseases) to protect you and others.

## The Health Service

In order to manage the NHS, some restricted information concerning treatments, drugs prescribed, numbers of patients seen, etc. is needed,



and hospitals and general practices must provide this information in returns to various central bodies.

This information has personal details such as your name and address removed wherever possible.

It is necessary from time to time to check these returns to prevent fraud as part of the NHS's statutory obligations. This may result in your being contacted by an NHS Fraud Office to see if you will consent to your records being checked. Only if you do consent will the auditors be allowed to access your records.

## Teaching Clinicians

Some medical files are needed to teach student clinicians about rare cases. Without such materials, new doctors and nurses would not be properly prepared to treat you.

## Planning



We help to provide national statistics to allow planning ahead for treatments, patient numbers, etc., but this uses summary information, not personal information.

## Medical Research

Some medical research will require your direct involvement (especially if taking part in clinical trials) in which case the circumstances will be fully explained to you, and your *express consent* required.

is available on the nhs web-site:

<http://www.doh.gov.uk/nhsexipu/confiden/>

If you do not consent, then you will not be included in the trial.

Other researchers only require access to medical statistics, and can greatly improve our understanding of health, and how to treat patients more effectively.



Generally, researchers only need information about groups of people, so that no individual information is apparent. In some cases, they need individual records, but wherever we can we will provide these in an 'anonymised' form (so individuals cannot be identified).

Sometimes, researchers need access to individual medical files. We will contact you first for your consent (and before this the researchers must present their case before an Ethics Committee to check that their research is appropriate and worthwhile).

Rarely, it may not be practicable (or possible) to contact individuals for their consent, in which case the researchers must make their case before a *Confidentiality Committee* to show that there is enough benefit to the public at large to justify this.

### Managing the data

We need to be able to move electronic information from system to system, extracting the data and modifying it for the next system. Occasionally, tests will need to be made on the data to check



that it has been transferred correctly. This will only

be done under carefully controlled conditions and all employees and contractors will be under strict contractual obligations to protect your confidentiality.

### Other Agencies



The NHS is not the only government service to provide you with care, and it will be necessary for us to provide other agencies with appropriate information, but only with your consent (or that of your relatives if you are too ill).

### How we protect your information

The sensitivity of patient information is well understood within the NHS. All staff and contractors are trained to respect their duty of confidentiality to you, and have this written in their contracts.

We keep paper and electronic records securely to prevent unauthorised access or misuse. Wherever practicable, we remove references to personal details such as your name and address, and often restrict it further to reduce the chances of anyone identifying a record as relating to you.

### What else?

You can have a say in how the NHS uses information about you and we are required by law to allow you access to your medical records. All requests to view your medical records should be made in writing. We are allowed by law to charge a fee to cover our administration and costs. If you want to find out more or have any concerns, please contact the Practice Manager. Further information