

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

MEDICAL RECORD SERVICES

F.O.I. AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	
	1.1 Disclosure of Information	3
	1.2 Aim of Policies	3
2.0	Telephone Calls	
	2.1 Non Medical Persons	3
	2.2 Release of Information: Non Medical Persons	4
	2.3 Medical Requests	4
	2.4 Release of Information: Medical Persons	4
	2.5 Release of Information: Parents/Patients	5
3.0	Weekend/After Hours Requests	5
4.0	Medical Record Administrators	
	4.1 Release of Information: Medical Record Administrators	6
5.0	Information That Cannot Be Released	6
6.0	Other Interested Parties	
	6.1 Solicitors Requests & Court Cases	7
	6.2 Patients Relatives, Friends, Non-Custodial Parents	7
	6.3 Police & Health and Community Services	7
7.0	Others	
	7.1 Allied Health Staff: Physiotherapists/Occupational Therapists/Chiropractors	7
	7.2 Medicare/Health Insurance Funds	7
	7.3 Letters For Speeding Fines/Absence From Work etc.	7
	7.4 Press/Television	7
	7.5 Advertising Agencies/Auxiliary Offices	7
8.0	Internal Recording Of Requests	8

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Disclosure Of Information

Under the Freedom of Information Act 1983, people are able to request access to information about their past or present episodes of care provide by the hospital and/or the administration of the hospital. Parents of minors may also request information concerning the treatment of their children.

The hospital may also provide information relating to a patient's episode of care to the patient's General Practitioner, the referring doctor or to the medical specialist which takes over a patient's care.

In addition to this the hospital receives requests from numerous outside agencies and the release of information to the bodies must be strictly controlled and not only comply with the patients right to confidentiality but also the hospitals legal obligations.

1.2 Aim of Policies

These policies have been updated to:

1. Provide Medical Record Staff with clear guidelines on **what** information may be released.
2. Ensure Medical Record Staff know **who** may request information.
3. Provide guidelines for **different requests** so that Medical Record Staff can initiate the appropriate action or refer the request on to the appropriate person/department.

2.0 TELEPHONE CALLS

Ethical and legal restrictions are numerous regarding the release of information so every care must be taken when releasing information.

2.1 Non Medical Persons

Information that can be released by clerical staff over the telephone is limited to:

1. Admission & Discharge Dates
2. Treating Doctor

Organisations/persons that can request this information include:

1. Transport Accident Commission
2. Medicare
3. Health & Community Services
4. Department of Social Security
5. Doctors Secretaries
6. Insurance Companies

2.2 Release of Information: Non Medical Requests

1. Take down all details of the history required
2. Locate history
3. Telephone organisation back to ensure the person is who they say they are and provide them with above information.
4. If the organisation wants more information they must apply for it under Freedom of Information procedures. No medical information is to be given to medical secretaries or representatives of the above organisations.

2.3 Medical Requests

Clerical Staff may give limited information to Doctors and other medical specialists outside the hospital over the telephone, by mail or facsimile. Information given over the telephone should be limited to:

1. Admission & Discharge Dates
2. Treating Doctor

If the doctor/medical specialist requires other information refer to procedure 2.4.

2.4 Release of Information: Medical Requests

1. Take the telephone number, name and address of the person making the call and all relevant details of the history they request and as much detail on what information they require. If a secretary of doctor rings establish who they are calling on behalf of.
2. Locate the history and ascertain if the information required is in the history
3. If the information required is:
 - a) discharge summaries
 - b) outpatient notes
 - c) correspondence
 - e) investigations/results

And this information is located clearly in the history then this can be mailed out after returning the Doctors' call to clarify that you are sending out what is required and the requestor is correct.

4. If the doctor requests information that clerical staff are uncertain about, or request the results of a test that is uncommon, clarify what is required with a Medical Record Administrator who will decide what information is required or telephone the requestor back.
3. If the doctor requires the information urgently take down all the details of a request and pass the request and the history on to an MRA who will return their call or decide if the information can be faxed.

If for any reason a clerical staff member is not satisfied as to the Bona Fide's of a caller transfer the request to an MRA.

2.5 Release of Information to Parents/Patients

1. Ask the caller if they require the information for themselves or are calling on behalf of another medical professional .
2. If they require the information for their own personal use explain to them that there are costs involved with providing this information and that if they require this information for another medical specialist that the Royal Children's can mail the required information directly to the specialist or we can contact the specialist to ascertain what information is required.
3. If the parent/guardian still wants the medical record transfer the caller to the Divisional Support Unit for further information regarding costs & waiting periods.
4. If the caller wishes to apply for the history immediately ask them to address their request to K Lowen, Medical Information Officer, Divisional Support Unit, RCH.
5. If the caller is the parent of patient over 18 they require the patients signed consent for release of information.
6. If the patient is deceased permission is required from the next-of-kin.
7. If the caller has any more queries regarding Freedom of Information transfer the call to Divisional Support Unit.

3.0 WEEKE

AYS

3.1 R

sts

1. If the caller provides the details of their request and inform them that the information will be provided the next working day between 8:00am and 5:00pm.

3.2

1. If the patient is in attendance there, and the information is required:
 - a) If the patient is not in attendance, inform the caller that the information will be provided the next working day between 8:00am and 5:00pm.
 - b) If the patient is not in attendance, inform the caller that the information will be provided the next working day between 8:00am and 5:00pm.
 - c) Tell the caller the Emergency Registrar will call them back with the details they require.
 - d) Locate the history and transfer the request and the history to the Emergency Registrar who will deal with the request.

2. If the requestor does not have the patient in attendance and wants copies of discharge summaries or other information take down all details of the request and inform them that there request will be answered on the next working day between 8:00am and 5:00

4.0 MEDICAL RECORD ADMINISTRATORS

Medical Record Administrators may release medical information to

- medical professionals
- dentists

4.1 Release of Information: Medical Record Administrators

1. They may quote verbatim out of the history what other medical staff have written ie: read out a discharge summary
2. They cannot under any circumstances interpret or provide any form of opinion on any medical condition or treatment.
3. If a doctor requires a medical opinion try to locate the treating doctor and get them to telephone the doctor back or tell the caller that the Medical Administration Fellow Karen Lowen, who is a medical specialist, will call them back by the next working day and send the history and request up to the Divisional Support Unit.
4. If Karen Lowen is away for a period of time exceeding more than two days and the request for information is urgent transfer the request to the Emergency Registrar.
5. Medical Record Administrators can release to parents:
 - immunisation dates
 - names of doctors
 - admission & discharge dates
 - no medical information
6. They must assist Medical Record Staff by handling any requests that staff are unsure of.
7. For information that is restricted or can not be released for other reasons the MRA is to telephone the caller back and explain the situation to the caller.

5.0 INFORMATION THAT CANNOT BE RELEASED

There is some information that can not be released by any Medical Records Personnel including Medical Record Administrators:

- a. Psychiatric information
 - b. Child Abuse information
 - c. Court Reports
 - d. Restricted Histories (Kept in Director of Medical Record Services' Office)
1. If the caller requires information pertaining to the above note the request and history details
 2. Transfer the request to an MRA who will organise follow-up

6.0 OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

6.1 Solicitors Requests & Court Cases:

Transfer the caller to the Divisional Support Unit who will provide them with the necessary information.

6.2 Patients Relatives, Friends, Non-Custodial Parents:

No information is to be released to these people under any circumstances, refer them back to the parents/guardian of the patient or the patient.

6.3 Police and Health & Community Services:

Admission, discharge dates and treating doctor can be given after verifying the caller as per procedure 2.1. No medical information is to be given, if they require this they must write to Karen Lowen, Divisional Support Unit, RCH, with the consent of the parents if consent is required. Parental/Guardian consent is not required for physical or sexual abuse cases.

7.0 OTHERS

7.1 Allied Health Staff: Physiotherapists/Occupational Therapists/Chiropractors

A written request is required with the consent of the involved party/ies.

7.2 Medicare/Health Insurance Funds

See item 2.1 & 2.2. Any other information will require a written request and consent of involved parties.

7.3 Letters for Speeding Fines/Absence from work etc

The request can be taken over the telephone and the Divisional Support Unit will release appropriate response.

7.4 Press/Television

No information is to be given under any circumstances. Refer all enquires to Public Relations during business hours

7.5 Advertising Agencies/Auxiliary Offices

No information is to be given. Refer all enquires to Public Relations during business hours

8.0 INTERNAL RECORDING OF REQUESTS

All information given over the telephone or sent as a result of a telephone request is to be recorded in the FOI exercise book situated on Joanna's desk. Information recorded in this book is:

- date of request
- patient details
- person who made request
- information requested
- action taken

The medical record should be documented with this information in the outpatient section in chronological order.

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY DECLARATION

I have read the Royal Children's Hospital Confidentiality Policy (Executive Instruction No 89/43), and I understand that any access I have to information regarding patients or the hospital is privileged access, and the information must be treated as confidential.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed: _____ Date: _____