**Patients' Guide to Confidentiality of Information**

**Confidentiality at the Surgery**

We want you to feel comfortable in discussing issues relating to your health with any health care professional within the practice and we therefore enforce a strict duty of confidentiality.

**Young People**

Confidentiality is just as important for young people. If a child over the age of 14 is considered fully competent to understand and make informed consent regarding their own health problems, information about that child’s medical health or history might not be released to parent or guardian without the child’s consent. Over 16s are responsible for their own lives.

**Members of your family**

If you are unwell, your partner, family or carer will be worried about you. However, your doctor cannot divulge information to them without your written consent. Occasionally you may be concerned about a relative who is unwilling to discuss their symptoms with their doctor. In these circumstances you can write to the doctor or make an appointment but the doctor will not be able to provide you with any information relating to the patient.

**Practice Staff**

Practice staff, for example receptionists, are never told of your confidential consultations. However, they do have access to your records in order to type letters, file and scan incoming hospital letters and for a number of other administrative duties. They are not allowed to access your notes for any other purpose. They are also not allowed to discuss any information relating to patients outside work. To do so would be a dismissible offence.

The receptionists may ask questions when you make an appointment. You do not have to supply any medical details if you do not wish to, but it will help the receptionists ensure that you get an appointment of the appropriate length with the appropriate person.

**Guidelines for confidentiality of information**

As a patient it is your right to have all information regarding your personal health, whether on paper or on the computer, kept confidential. All staff at the practice are required to sign a statement of confidentiality to ensure that the highest possible standards of confidentiality are maintained.

At times, it may be necessary to share some information regarding your medical history with other health care professionals such as hospital consultants, to ensure you receive appropriate treatment. In addition, there are certain statutory requirements that require a practice to pass on information to the authorities, for example notifications of birth or death, infectious diseases, and gunshot wounds. In other cases where medical information is requested, such as releasing medical records to solicitors, private medical insurers or local authorities, information is only released with the patient’s written authority to do so.