POUND ROAD MEDICAL CENTRE INTERNET AND EMAIL POLICY

Current as of: FEB 2024

# **Introduction**

### Explanatory notes

*Your practice internet and email policy provides guidance to your practice team on what they can do and cannot do when using the internet and email from devices provided by your practice for business purposes.*

*Before creating your policy you need to determine if your practice owned devices and networks are to be used only for conducting business activities or if you are going to permit limited personal use of email and internet from these devices. This policy template is specifically aimed at practices who will allow reasonable personal use of internet and email.*

Pound Road Medical Centre recognises the practice team requires access to email and the internet to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients. Pound Road Medical Centre supports the right of staff to have access to reasonable personal use of the internet and email communications in the workplace using the devices and networks provided by the practice.

# **Purpose and objectives**

This policy sets out guidelines for acceptable use of internet and email by the practice team, contractors and other staff of Pound Road Medical Centre. Internet and email is provided primarily to assist the team carry out their duties of employment.

# **Scope**

This internet and email policy applies to the practice team, contractors and other staff of Pound Road Medical Centre who access the internet and email on practice owned devices, including, but not limited to work computers to perform their work.

Use of the internet by the practice team, contractors and other staff is permitted and encouraged where this supports the goals and objectives of Pound Road Medical Centre. Access to the internet is a privilege and the practice team, contractors and other staff must adhere to this policy.

Violation of these policies could result in [the practice needs to determine what action will be taken if this policy is breached and outline this as part of the policy scope. Action could include:

* disciplinary and/or legal action
* termination of employment
* the practice team, contractors and other staff being held personally liable for damages caused by any violations of this policy]

All employees are required to confirm they have understood and agree to abide by this email and internet policy.

# **Policy content**

The practice team, contractors and other staff may use the internet and email access provided by Pound Road Medical Centre for:

* any work and work-related purposes

#### Unacceptable internet and email use

The practice team, contractors and other staff may not use internet or email access provided by Pound Road Medical Centre to:

[your practice should define what the internet and email cannot be used for and could include the following:

* creating or exchanging messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene or threatening
* visiting web sites containing objectionable (including pornographic) or criminal material
* exchanging any confidential or sensitive information held by your general practice
* creating, storing or exchanging information in violation of copyright laws
* using internet-enabled activities such as gambling, gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities
* creating or exchanging advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited or bulk email
* playing electronic or online games in work time.

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# **Definitions**

**EMAIL POLICY**

**Communicating by electronic means**

Our practice email account for patients and stakeholders for communication with our practice is info@poundroadmc.com.au. Only appropriate non-clinical matters are dealt with via email exchanges. No consulting or advice services are conducted by email. This must be communicated face to face by a medical practitioner or other appropriate health professional, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Since 2020 due to COVID-19 Telehealth has been the main way to provide consultations, which gave rise to communicating with Patient, Medical Professionals & other Legal entities. All patient related documents are sent as zipped file and are password protected.

The Practice has 3 main email accounts and allocated to Responsible staff.

Reception@poundroadmc.com.au:

All reception staff are allowed to access this email account. This account is used by Reception staff to send documents to patients. Eg: Medical Certificates, referrals, etc. Also receive emails from patients, Specialists and all documents received as attachments are scanned to the Medical Director Holding file for Doctors to check.

Nurse@poundroadmc.com.au:

Nurses use this email to communicate with Suppliers, Specialists, Allied Health is relation to Patient Care.

Info@poundroadmc.com.au:

This email is checked by the Practice Manager as it was primarily used for Admin purposes. But since Covid, this account is also used to send documents to patients, Medical Professionals & other Legal entities. Eg: Medical Certificates, referrals, etc. Also receive emails from patients, Specialists and all documents received as attachments are scanned to the Medical Director Holding file for Doctors to check.

The email accounts will be routinely checked throughout the business day by the reception staff for reception @poundroadmc.com.au; nurses for nurse @poundroadmc.com.au & Practice Manager for info@poundroadmc.com.au Email messages are forwarded to the appropriate team member’s work email account for response within 24 hours.

Electronic communication provides a useful and alternative point of access for our patients. Our patients have the option to contact, or be contacted by our practice through electronic means via SMS. Our patients are informed of the risks associated with some methods of electronic communications and that their privacy and confidentiality may be compromised. Our practice adheres to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), the Privacy Act 1988, Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) Health Records Act 2001 (Vic). The practice may become liable for the contents of any

email message under certain circumstances and therefore an email disclaimer is inserted into the signature of all practice emails. Email and SMS between the practice and the patient, including any action taken in response to the message/s are included in the patient’s medical record.

Our practice aims to ensure all patient messages or other communications including emails that require subsequent follow-up by a doctor or other staff member are responded to in a timely manner. All messages from patients, to patients, or about patients become part of the patient’s health record, in addition to any actions taken in response to the message.

**Email**

The use of email is also intended for practice related purposes including for staff to communicate with each other and with external individuals and organisations relevant to the work and services of our practice. Our practice encourages the correct and proper use of email and require all staff to comply to the following guidelines:

* Limit the personal use of social media platforms to dedicated work breaks provided it does not interfere with the work responsibilities
* Under no circumstances use email to, send, receive or view any materials that:
	+ Is misleading or deceptive or you have reason to suspect is illegal
	+ Could potentially result in victimisation, harassment or bullying,
	+ Is able to lead to criminal or civil liability,
	+ Could be reasonably found to be, offensive, threatening, intimidating, abusive, or defamatory
	+ Is liable to discriminate against, harass or vilify colleagues, patients or the public, on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, marital status, age, race or cultural background, religious background, disability, illness
	+ Could damage our practice reputation

It is the responsibility of all staff members to report any emails that may contain malware or viruses to Practice Manager to ensure should they can be investigated and safely removed, as necessary.

Email is not a secure method of sending information and under no circumstances should be used to send information which is highly confidential or sensitive including patient health or other information unless adequately encrypted and using the appropriate practice software.

**Policy review statement**

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the current processes and procedures of Pound Road Medical Centre and current legislation requirements.

*Annuall Review to be conducted.*