

## **Complaints**

Despite the best intentions complaints may arise. Our practice deals with complaints in a courteous and understanding manner. Perceptions of what is reasonable and fair can change when patients are unwell or anxious. Patient satisfaction affects health outcomes and our practice acknowledges that patient complaints are an important source of customer feedback. Our practice provides patients with the opportunity to provide compliments, complaints or suggestions.

This may be through the provision of information in the practice information sheet or brochures/posters about the following:

- practice commitment to quality of care through responding to patient feedback
- practice process for receiving and responding to patient complaints
- State or Territory health care complaint bodies (list available on Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care web site) – Health Rights Commission (ph 1800 077508)
- Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner

## **Handling complaints**

- When receiving complaints, staff should follow this process in order to minimise further patient anxiety and hostility, potentially leading to litigation:
- notify the staff member responsible for complaints
- take the patient to a private area of our practice (if the complaint is provided verbally)
- listen carefully to the patient, take notes and repeat the key messages to ensure that the complaint is understood
- assure the patient that the complaint will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated
- document the complaint in a memorandum or file note format and place a copy in the patient's health record
- record in the complaints register
- alert the treating GP
- acknowledge the complaint in writing within 2 working days and place a copy in the patient's health record
- provide the patient with updates during the investigation to assure them the matter has not been overlooked

- if a clinically-based complaint, alert the treating GP's medical defence organisation for appropriate action
- decide and action appropriate remedy, and notify the patient verbally and in writing
- record all contact with the patient including written responses in their health record
- hold a practice meeting to review the case and to see if it could have been prevented.

#### Practice procedure

In our practice, we provide patients with the opportunity to give compliments, complaints and suggestions by providing such information in our practice information brochure. In our practice, the staff member responsible for investigation and resolution of complaints is the Practice Manager.

#### 10.6 Management of potential medical defence

##### Practice policy

GPs in our practice notify their medical defence organisation (MDO) immediately if there is suspicion that a claim will be initiated against the practitioner or practice. The GP is also contact with their MDO on the receipt of an impairment certificate served upon our practice or practitioner by a party making a claim.