

6.0 Patient Feedback & Complaints

Policy

Mansfield Medical Clinic ensures opportunities are available for patients and other visitors to tell us, 'How we're doing' and we collect formal systematic patient experience feedback at least every 3 years and aim to conduct less formal patient surveys on an annual basis .

The practice information brochure provides patients with information on how to provide feedback, including how to make a complaint.

We have a complaints resolution process which all staff can describe, and we also make the contact details for the state or territory health complaints agencies readily available to patients if we are unable to resolve their concerns ourselves. We ensure the process is easily accessible to all patients regardless of their background or abilities.

Patients have a 'right to complain' and where possible patients and others are encouraged to raise any concerns directly with the practice team who are trained to make sure patients of the practice feel confident that any feedback or complaints made at the practice will be handled appropriately.

We believe most complaints can be responded to and resolved at the time the patient or other people such as carers (relative, friend other consumer) makes them known to us.

If a satisfactory outcome is not achieved then the complaint can go directly to the Health Complaints Commissioner for action. The public may also call the Office of the Health Complaints Commissioner at any time concerning a query or to report a complaint.

This practice must provide and adhere to a complaints process for privacy issues and those related to the *Australian Privacy Principles* (APP's) and all subsequent updated amendments and reviews.

All staff should be prepared to address complaints as they arise. Depending on the nature of the complaint and advice received from any medical indemnity company, complaints are recorded and actioned, with a copy placed in the patient's medical record if the complaint is specifically of a medical nature.

All clinical staff and the Practice Manager are aware of their professional and legal obligations regarding the mandatory reporting of unprofessional conduct.

Procedure

Patients, and others, have opportunities to register their complaints either verbally to staff, in writing (letter) or via outward facing emails. Patients should feel free to complain anonymously if desired.

All staff should be prepared to address complaints as they arise. When receiving complaints staff should keep in mind the following in order to minimise any further patient anxiety, hostility or the possibility of future litigation:

- Handle all complaints seriously, no matter how trivial they may seem.

- Verbal complaints made in person should be addressed in a private area of the practice where possible.
- Use tactful language when responding to complaints.
- Don't blame other staff. Patients may not have all the facts or may distort them.
- Address the patient's expectations regarding how they want the matter resolved.
- Assure the patient that their complaint will be investigated and the matter not overlooked.
- Document or record all complaints and other relevant information and pass to the Practice Manager to ensure they are informed of the complaint. (Even if you believe the matter has been resolved).
- Alert the doctor or relevant clinical staff about disgruntled or hostile patients so he/she can diffuse the situation immediately.
- Always inform the Practice Manager if you become aware of any significant statements made by the patient or significant change in patient attitude. Often patients will tell staff when they are reluctant to tell the doctor.

The Practice Manager is the person responsible for feedback collection, analysis and handling of complaints. The Practice Manager oversees and coordinates the investigation and resolution of complaints. All complaints are reviewed and discussed with the Practice Principals at regular Practice Meetings, or escalated for earlier attention at the Practice Manager's discretion.

Any investigation and resolution of complaints is undertaken using an "*Open Disclosure Process*", by incorporating the following:

- Acknowledge the patients right to complain.
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, but within five (5) working days outlining the process and next steps.
- Respond to all complaints as soon as reasonably practicable, but within thirty (30) days in an open and constructive manner including an explanation and if appropriate an apology.
- If a resolution of the matter is to take longer than thirty (30) days, an update of the resolution activities will be provided to the patient, with an anticipated revised timeframe for resolution.
- Work with the patient to resolve the complaint and communicate the outcome including any changes or improvements made as a result of the complaint.
- If the complaint is of a medical nature it is always referred to the doctor.
- Where a complaint is made against a staff member they are provided with an opportunity to discuss the details in a private setting.
- As a routine the clinics insurer is contacted when there is a complaint about a member of the clinical team in order to seek advice on resolving the complaint before any action is taken. The Clinician, at that time, may elect to inform their Medical Defence Organisation that a complaint against them has been made.
- If relevant, the independent practitioner/sole trader relationship is explained to the complainant as these individuals are not employees of MMC or MIHS.
- Care is taken to ensure the complaint does not adversely affect the patients care.
- Record the complaint, investigation, and actions on the Complaints Register. If appropriate, with a copy placed in the patient's medical record if the complaint is of a medical nature, the details also retained in the complaints file.
- Ensure where appropriate, complaints are reviewed at staff and practice meetings. Other types of patient feedback - i.e. surveys, suggestion box are also reviewed at team meetings.
- A record of all improvements made as a result of patient feedback or complaints is kept.
- Where appropriate patient/s are informed about practice improvements made as a result of their input.

Patients are also advised how to contact the Health Complaints Commissioner. A copy of the “Implementing Open Disclosure in Small Practices” is held for reference at

[Links%20and%20references/Implementing-the-Australian-Open-Disclosure-Framework-in-small-practices.pdf](#)

Privacy Complaints - Office of the Australian Information Commission

1300 363 992

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

Fax: +61 2 9284 9666

Post: GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2001

The Office of the Health Complaints Commissioner is also able to receive complaints concerning privacy issues. Complaints here will have a response within 28 days.

Health Complaints Commissioner

1300 582 113

Fax No.: +61 3 9032 3111

Online Form – hcc.vic.gov.au/contact

Translating and interpreting service – call through TIS National 131 450 or contact through relayservice.gov.au

or write to:

Health Complaints Commissioner

Level 26, 570 Bourke Street

Melbourne 3000 Victoria Australia

Members of the public may make a notification to Australian Health practitioner regulation agency (AHPRA) <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/> (AHPRA) about the conduct, health or performance of a practitioner or the health of a student. Practitioners, employers and education providers are all mandated by law to report notifiable conduct relating to a registered practitioner or student to AHPRA.

This document is to be reviewed regularly to ensure appropriateness and compliance with RACGP Standards and contact information is up to date.

See Also:

- [Compliments Register – living document](#)
- [Complaints Register – living document](#)

Drafted	Last Revised/Issue Date	Reviewed By	Complies with	Other Notations:
October 2016			RACGP 4 th Edition	
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	October 2024	R MacWhirter		
	February 2025	Practice Principals		
	March 2025	R MacWhirter		
	April 2025	J Anka		Principals 14.04.25