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Patient Complaints Policy

Purpose

Strach Oncology (ABN: 41956253539) (**the Practice**) recognises that our patients entrust us with their wellbeing, and we are committed to providing high-quality care and maintaining a positive patient experience. We acknowledge that despite our best efforts, there may be occasions when our patients feel disappointed or concerned about their experience at our practice. We recognise the rights of our patients and/or their representative to raise a concern about the care and service they receive from our Practice, and we are committed to managing complaints in a manner that is consistent with our values. This policy outlines the procedure available to them when making a complaint and the resolution process we follow.

From time to time, we may make changes to this policy. We will update this policy to reflect any changes. A copy of this policy is available in hard copy from reception staff.

Scope

The policy applies to staff of the Practice and patients wanting to submit a complaint against the Practice. A complaint is an expression of concern, dissatisfaction or frustration with the quality or delivery of service, a policy or procedure, or the conduct of another person that requires a response or resolution.

Policy

The Practice is committed to taking all complaints seriously and we will treat all complaints fairly, with impartiality and transparency, while maintaining confidentiality. All assessment of complaints will be undertaken in a manner consistent with our values.

Guiding Principles

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. The Practice will ensure personal information that identifies individuals is only disclosed as permitted under the Australian Privacy laws and confidentiality obligations.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Responsiveness and Efficiency

The Practice will acknowledge, document, provide updates in relation to the complaint and track the complaint in a timely manner in line with the policy and will ensure the level of assessment is proportionate to the complexity of the complaint.

Conflict of Interest Management

Complaint documentation will be kept separate from patient files. Individuals who may have a conflict of interest in the matter will not be involved in the management of a complaint.

Complaint Process

Complaints may be made by the patient either directly to a staff member, over the phone or in writing, to the Practice Manager.

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Prepared and authorised by: Dr Madeleine Strach

- Both written and verbal complaints will be documented in our complaints register, along with any immediate action taken to resolve the situation.
- In some circumstances we may request that a verbal complaint be submitted to the Practice in writing.

The majority of issues causing concern can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members. Even if an issue is able to be resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues in the Practice's complaints register so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising and take appropriate action.

Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 business days and are to be investigated by the Practice Manager within 20 business days. If further time is required, the patient will be informed of the delay and be provided with an updated timeframe. The patient will be kept informed by the Practice Manager throughout the investigation.

Depending on the nature and/or seriousness of the complaint, the Practice may make further contact to discuss the details and address the patient's expectations regarding how they want the matter resolved.

Once an investigation is completed within the communicated timeframe and a suitable resolution is reached, the outcome will be discussed with the patient and provided in writing.

The amendment of practice policies or procedures may also be made, and any preventative action may be undertaken to reduce the likelihood of further complaints of this nature, promote quality service delivery, and maintain a safe environment for patients and staff.

Escalation

Where the complaint implies serious misconduct (for example, serious risk to the health and safety of patients or staff, or a criminal offence), or where mandatory reporting is required, the Practice has an obligation to refer the matter to the appropriate agency as required by law.

Roles and Responsibilities

Patients are expected to:

- Cooperate with the Practice to address and resolve their complaint, including responding to any requests from the Practice for further information related to their complaint in a timely manner.

All staff are expected to:

- Understand and comply with complaints handling in line with this policy including ensuring any complaint they receive is recorded in the complaints register.
- Provide a private area in the Practice for patients wishing to verbally discuss a complaint.
- Immediately attempt to resolve the complaint within their role and authority if they receive a complaint.
- Ensure there is an accurate understanding and record of the verbal complaint by listening attentively, asking clarifying questions and taking notes.

The Practice Manager is expected to:

- Manage and monitor all patient complaints within the Practice.
- Exercise primary responsibility for receiving, acknowledging and resolving complaints in line with this policy.



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- Where appropriate, advise people of their right to make a complaint.
- Provide advice and assistance to people who would like to submit a complaint.
- Conduct internal reviews of complaints.
- Ensure there is continuous review and improvement of internal processes and policies in response to prevent similar complaints from occurring and promote quality service delivery.

Staff directly named or involved in a complaint are expected to:

- Provide a clear and honest account and provide any relevant information and documents to assist in the investigation and resolution of the matter.
- Respond to requests for information in a timely manner.
- Engage openly in the complaint handling process, including participating in discussion with other parties to resolve the concerns if appropriate.
- Respect those individuals involved in the complaint handling process.