How The Royal Melbourne Hospital is protecting your privacy

This document outlines:

- We collect personal information so that we can provide you with appropriate treatment
- We comply with laws governing the collection, use and disclosure of patient information
- You have the right to refuse disclosure of your information to providers outside the Parkville Precinct
- Your medical record will usually be destroyed 15 years after your last visit
- You can gain access to your medical record via Freedom of Information (FOI).

What information does The Royal Melbourne Hospital collect about you?

The Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) collects information such as your name, address and contact details, as well as information about your health problems and the treatment you are given.

New information is added to your record every time you attend or have contact with The RMH.

How we collect and store information

We collect and maintain personal and medical information in order to provide you with appropriate care and treatment. The information we collect during your visits is stored securely in an electronic medical record (EMR) system.

This system is shared by The RMH, Royal Children's Hospital, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, and The Royal Women's Hospital (The Parkville Precinct). The EMR can be accessed by staff from all of these health services but only when they are directly involved with your care or treatment.

Go to thermh.org.au/emr to find out more about the EMR.
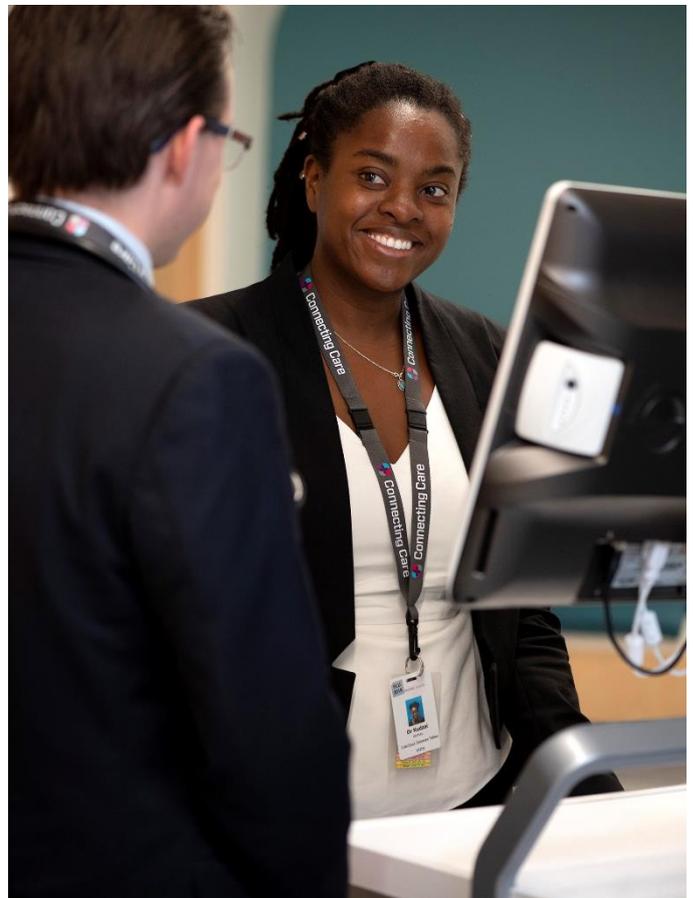
The shared EMR is hosted on Royal Children's and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre servers and this is where your data is physically held. The Royal Children's Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will therefore collect patient information from each health service to host, manage and support the shared EMR. The RMH and The Royal Women's Hospital will have access to collect and upload further information to the shared EMR in the course of treating their patients.

Information pertaining to your care prior to the implementation of the shared EMR will be stored across clinical information systems and paper medical records. All clinical information is stored securely by The RMH Health Information Services.

Other uses

We may also use your information for internal teaching or for research approved by our Human Research Ethics Committee.

Your information may also be used within The RMH for planning, evaluation and quality improvement. Reasonable steps are taken to remove details that identify you in any reports and publications.

Protecting patient privacy

The Parkville Precinct is committed to protecting privacy by keeping the information we collect about you secure from unauthorised access, use, disclosure or loss.

All paper and electronic systems across the Parkville Precinct are managed and maintained appropriately. There are strict privacy laws, policies and procedures that are in place to govern the collection, use, release and disposal of your information. Staff access to these systems is audited regularly by each health service to monitor compliance.

Parkville Connect

The Parkville Connect portal allows the sharing of certain information in the EMR with your nominated local doctor and their practice, and by other community health care providers you have consented to access your information.

This will provide quick access to your information and inform shared care between the hospital, your local doctor and other community health care providers.

Health Hub

The Health Hub portal allows patients and approved proxies to access some of their hospital information from the EMR.

This includes information about appointments, certain test results, some clinic notes and correspondence from the Parkville Precinct. More information is available at health-hub.org.au

To whom might we disclose your information?

We may disclose your information to others outside The RMH, including your doctor and other health and care community support providers, if this is necessary for your further treatment. If you are an inpatient, we will tell your relatives and friends where you are and your general condition, if they call or visit.

We will disclose your information to any person or organisation authorised by you. This will usually involve you signing a release document. The RMH may also be obliged to release your information:

- where required by law (e.g. by Act of Parliament or in the case of a legal claim)
- where required by government authorities and departments (e.g. registration of births, deaths, diseases and treatments)
- for quality and safety purposes (as authorised by the Health Services Act 1988). This would be limited to entities responsible for investigating failures in quality and safety and for health system quality and safety oversight. These departments include the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Safer Care Victoria, the Victorian Agency for Health Information, and/or another health service entity. Any such sharing would be subject to and comply with existing data security and storage requirements set out in the Health Privacy

Principles and Information Privacy Principles. The sharing and using of information is designed to address any quality and safety issues that may have affected you to ensure they inform continuous service improvement.

- The RMH is participating in the Australian Government My Health Record. Your discharge summaries and some pathology and radiology reports may be uploaded to your My Health Record, if you have one. Please tell us at the beginning of your visit if you do not want these clinical documents uploaded to your record. For more information go to myhealthrecord.gov.au or Help line 1800 723 471.

Can you refuse to disclose your information?

Yes, you have the right to refuse disclosure of your information to providers outside the Parkville Precinct. You may exercise this right by completing a Refusal of Consent to Disclosure and Use of Information form.

However, refusing permission to disclose your information might inhibit you receiving appropriate care and treatment in the future. If you have any questions about disclosing your information, please speak with a staff member involved in your care.

Who might contact you after you have been treated by The RMH?

- A member of the health care team for follow up, including service evaluation
- The RMH researcher to invite you to participate in a research project
- Our fundraising department, or its representatives, may send you information or contact you with a request for financial support. If you do not wish for this to happen, please contact The RMH Foundation on 03 9342 7111 or email info@rmhfoundation.org.au. Visit the website at rmhfoundation.org.au.

What if you are unable to give consent?

If you are unable to give permission for your information to be released, permission may be sought from your authorised representative. People who are permitted to act as an 'authorised representative' for a patient are specified by law.

Your authorised representative may exercise the same rights as you in relation to withholding consent to the use or disclosure of, or making a request for access to, your information.

How long do we keep information about you?

The RMH complies with the statutory requirements for information retention according to the Public Records Office of Victoria. At the end of the retention period, records are securely destroyed.

Generally, inpatient records are kept for a minimum of 15 years after last attendance, or until the age of 25 if the patient was a child when receiving treatment, whichever is the longest.

Outpatient and emergency department records are kept for a minimum of 12 years and up to 20 years from the date of the patient's last attendance.

For psychiatric inpatients and outpatients, records are kept for a minimum of 25 years, or until the age of 43, whichever is the longest.

Radiology images are kept for a minimum of five years after creation.

Records of deceased patients are kept for 12 years from the date of death.

How can you gain access to your information?

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act gives you the right to access your medical record.

Requests for access must be made in writing to the FOI Office:

Mail:

Freedom of Information Officer
Health Information Services
The Royal Melbourne Hospital
PO BOX 2155 Parkville Victoria 3050

Email:

FOIrequest@mh.org.au

A fee may be charged for this service. Please note that a separate *Freedom of Information and You* brochure is available. If you have any questions phone 9342 7224 or email FOIRequest@mh.org.au

Can I get access to someone else's record under FOI?

You may access another person's records if you have their written authority. You may also access another person's records if you can provide evidence that you:

- have been given appropriate Power of Attorney (Medical)

- have been appointed as a Legal Guardian of that person

- are the Senior Next of Kin for a deceased person.

Can records be released outside FOI?

Release of records may occur in accordance with due legal process (e.g. as evidence in a legal action before a court).

Records may also be released to other healthcare providers for the continuing provision of health care (e.g. when you are in the emergency department of another health service, or discharged to another health care service).

How much does an FOI request cost?

The cost involved will vary according to each request. Charges are updated annually and may include:

- application fee (non-refundable)
- search fee (if applicable)

- postage and handling
- viewing and interpretation fee
- summary fee
- photocopying of information

We may waive or reduce the application fee in some instances e.g. financial hardship, Health Care Card and

Pension Card holders.

Current fees and charges are viewable on the RMH FOI webpage thermh.org.au/FOI

How long will I have to wait?

We have 30 days to inform you of our decision about your request. At that time you may also receive an invoice for any applicable charges. The charges must be paid in full before we send you any documents.

There may be circumstances where we need to consult.

Contact

**The Royal Melbourne Hospital
Health Information Services**
9342 7780

This brochure is an outline of The RMH Privacy Policy, and our commitment to respecting and protecting your privacy.

If you have any questions about your information please contact us.