

7.7. Follow up of tests, results and referrals

7.7.1. Policy

Our practice's system for the follow up of tests, results and referrals has a strong focus on risk management.

Our practice team is adequately educated, trained and is cognisant of the procedures associated with:

- How patients are advised of the process for follow up of results
- The system by which pathology results, imaging reports, investigations reports and clinical correspondence received by our practice is reviewed by a general practitioner, signed, acted upon in a timely manner and incorporated into the patient's health record
- How we follow up and recall patients when we order important or clinically significant tests or investigations or initiate important referrals, and
- How we follow up and recall patients with clinically significant tests, results or correspondence.

All test results, including pathology results, diagnostic imaging and investigation reports, and clinical correspondence received are reviewed, initialled (or electronic equivalent) and, where appropriate, acted upon in a timely manner and incorporated into the patient's health record.

The nature and extent of the practice's responsibility for following up test results, diagnostic imaging and investigation reports, and clinical correspondence/referrals depends on what is reasonable in the circumstance and the clinical significance of the test, referral or result.

Whether something requires follow up is determined by the:

- Probability that the patient will be harmed if follow up does not occur
- Likely seriousness of the harm, and
- Burden of taking steps to avoid the risk of harm.

Important referrals for consultations or tests ordered are followed up by the referring practitioner (or delegated authority) in a timely manner. This may include checking the patient has attended the referred consultation or the expected investigation, that correspondence or test results have been received and reviewed, and that a record of any follow up and subsequent actions or recall process is incorporated into the patient's health record.

Sometimes our general practitioners may need to be contacted outside our practice's normal opening hours by the pathology service about a serious or life threatening result, and we have provisions for allowing this contact to occur (refer to **Section 5.10 – After-hours service**).

Our patients (or their carers) are made aware of their obligations and responsibilities for their own healthcare. This includes being informed about how to obtain their results and the seriousness of not attending for ordered appointments/investigations and any recall or subsequent follow up. Where appropriate, this advice is documented in the patient's health record.

Where a patient indicates they do not intend to comply with a recommended test or referral, the patient is deemed to have refused medical treatment or advice and is managed in accordance with **Section 7.12 – Management of a patient refusing treatment or advice.**

In addition to an appreciation of the need for timeliness when following up and actioning referrals, tests and results our practice team members are aware of the need for confidentiality and discretion with regard to referrals, diagnostic tests and results or correspondence.

7.7.2. Procedure

The procedures used by our general practice to review, follow up and recall patients are complex and varied. The system is designed in a way that anticipates that individual cases will require different levels of follow up depending on the clinical significance or importance of the case.

All of our patients will be encouraged to make a follow-up appointment after any tests ordered by our doctors. They are also informed when they first registered with clinic that they should see our doctors in person for any test results, we do not inform results over the phone (except tele consultation), by email, fax or post.

Doctors are required to check patients Holding file each shift, they can mark "Discuss", "Return urgently" and " No action" based on their clinical judgements.

All those patients who have been marked as "Discuss" and "Return urgently" will appear on our recall system which supported by health Engine.

For any "Urgent recall" the action time should be within 2 days. Doctors can inform nurses or receptionist to send 1 text message, make 2 phone call at different times and send 1 registered letter. For any non-urgent recall, doctors should send 2 text message, require nurses to call patient once then a plain letter can be sent if there is no follow-up appointment has been made by patient within 7 days.

All actions should be recorded into patient's file with date and time and patient's responses.

Doctors should hand over to other doctors when they are away, so the buddy doctor can check the holding file on each shift for the absent doctor.

Dr HuaYang Guo will be contacted if there is any urgent results outside normal opening hours.