



CEASING PATIENT CARE POLICY

Purpose

GreenHills health Hub is committed to maintaining appropriate therapeutic relationships with patients while recognising that there may be circumstances where a practitioner or the practice can no longer safely or appropriately provide ongoing care.

This policy establishes a fair and consistent process for ceasing a patient's care and aims to minimise disruption to the patient's ongoing healthcare.

The practice also respects a patient's right to choose another practitioner or healthcare provider and will support appropriate continuity of care when a patient chooses to seek alternative care.

Scope

This policy applies to all patients and all practitioners providing care at GreenHills health Hub.

Circumstances Where Care May Be Ceased

Care may be considered for cessation where:

- The therapeutic relationship has irretrievably broken down.
- There has been repeated threatening, abusive, violent or inappropriate behaviour.
- There has been discriminatory or harassing behaviour towards practitioners or staff.
- A patient repeatedly behaves in a manner that compromises the safety of staff, practitioners or other patients.
- There is an ongoing conflict of interest or professional boundary concern.
- The practitioner believes they can no longer provide appropriate care within their scope, expertise or available resources.
- The patient's healthcare needs are more appropriately managed by another service or practitioner.
- There has been persistent failure to comply with reasonable practice requirements that makes ongoing care impracticable.
- Other circumstances arise in which the practitioner reasonably considers that continuing the therapeutic relationship is no longer appropriate.

A patient's complaint, decision to seek a second opinion, refusal of treatment or exercise of their lawful rights will not, by itself, be a reason to cease care.

Patient Decision to Seek Alternative Care

Patients have the right to choose another practitioner or healthcare provider and to cease receiving care from GreenHills health Hub.

The practice will respect a patient's decision to seek alternative care and will not disadvantage a patient because they choose to transfer their care.

Where a patient advises the practice that they wish to transfer their care, the practice will:

- Document the patient's decision in the health record.
- Discuss any immediate or ongoing healthcare needs where clinically appropriate.

- Provide appropriate referrals where required and clinically appropriate.
- Support continuity of care during the transition.
- Facilitate the transfer of relevant health information in accordance with the patient's consent, privacy requirements and applicable legislation.
- Document the actions taken by the practice to support the transfer of care.

The patient remains responsible for arranging ongoing care with their chosen healthcare provider.

Decision to Cease Care by the Practice

Where possible, the practitioner should discuss concerns with the patient and attempt to resolve the issue before deciding to cease care.

The Principal GP and/or Practice Manager may be consulted where appropriate.

The decision to cease care should be based on reasonable and documented grounds.

Where an ethical, professional or medico-legal concern exists, the practitioner and/or practice should seek advice from their **medical defence organisation** where necessary.

Notice to the Patient

Where care is to cease at the decision of the practice or practitioner, the patient will generally be advised in writing.

The communication should:

- Clearly state that the practice/practitioner will no longer provide ongoing care.
- Provide the effective date, allowing reasonable time for the patient to make alternative arrangements where clinically appropriate.
- Avoid unnecessary detail or language that could be perceived as punitive.
- Provide information about obtaining ongoing care from another healthcare provider.
- Explain how the patient can request transfer of their health record where applicable.
- Provide information about urgent care arrangements where appropriate.

In exceptional circumstances, immediate cessation may be necessary where continued attendance presents an immediate safety risk.

Continuity of Care

The practice will take reasonable steps to minimise disruption to a patient's ongoing healthcare, whether care is ceased by the practice or the patient chooses to transfer their care.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- Providing reasonable notice.
- Providing appropriate referrals.
- Providing information about alternative general practices or healthcare providers.
- Completing urgent or clinically necessary care during the transition period.
- Providing prescriptions or other necessary documentation where clinically appropriate and legally permitted.
- Facilitating the transfer of relevant health information with the patient's consent and in accordance with privacy requirements.
- Communicating relevant information to the receiving practitioner where appropriate and authorised.

The actions taken to support continuity of care will be documented in the patient's health record.

The patient remains responsible for arranging ongoing care once reasonable notice has been provided.

Documentation

The practitioner will document the decision to cease care, or the patient's decision to transfer care, and the relevant circumstances in the patient's health record.

Documentation should include, where applicable:

- The patient's decision to seek alternative care.
- The reason for ceasing care.
- Relevant discussions with the patient.
- Any warnings or attempts to resolve the issue.
- The date care will cease or transfer.
- Information provided to the patient regarding alternative care.
- Appropriate referrals provided.
- Requests for transfer of health information.
- Actions taken to support continuity of care.
- Any other relevant actions taken by the practitioner or practice.

Documentation relating to advice obtained from a medical defence organisation should be maintained separately from the patient's health record where appropriate.

Emergency Care

Ceasing ongoing care does not remove the practitioner's professional obligations in relation to an immediate medical emergency.

Where a patient presents with an urgent or emergency health issue during a transition period, appropriate immediate action will be taken and emergency services will be contacted where required.

Review

Cases involving cessation of care by the practice should be reviewed by the Principal GP and/or Practice Manager where appropriate to ensure the decision was reasonable, appropriately documented and consistent with professional and legal obligations.

Where necessary, advice should be sought from the practitioner's and/or practice's medical defence organisation.

Related Documents

- Patient Rights and Responsibilities Policy
- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Anti-discrimination Policy - Patients
- Cultural Safety Policy
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Incident, Near Miss, Adverse Outcome Reporting Policy

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Amendments			
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