

## Introduction

The Owner of Brisbane General and Laser Dentists believes that setting guidelines for how the practice operates is important in delivering consistently high-quality dentistry in a safe environment for patients and staff.

We recognise that staff are a valuable resource and are the key to providing high quality services to patients. The purpose of this Policy is to provide clear guidelines to all staff, including agency and locum staff, with respect to our:

- policies, procedures and protocols
- expectations of service delivery

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists 's Governance Systems for Safety and Quality Policy

The Owner has developed and implemented an, organisation-wide, integrated management system as included below, that maintains and improves the reliability and quality of patient care and outcomes. All guidelines have been developed in consultation with staff and take into account feedback received from patients.

The Owner of Brisbane General and Laser Dentists will:

- Ensure that all staff have access to, and knowledge of, all current practice policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines (including adopted clinical guidelines). Staff will be updated when changes occur.
- Monitor dental practitioners to ensure they work within their scope of practice.
- All staff will be monitored and reviewed to ensure they complete allocated tasks and are compliant with practice policies.
- Ensure the governance and quality management systems continue to be relevant and that staff are compliant with them.
- Regularly review the management systems, associated policies, and procedures.

## Governance Systems

### Governance Structure

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists is an associateship practice operating under the organisational structure as illustrated below:

### Staff

Quality professional and patient orientated services are achieved by:

- Employing a sufficient number of staff skilled or trained (including on-the-job training) in the tasks they are undertaking to meet the service requirements of the practice.

- Employing appropriately registered clinical staff to meet the clinical service needs of the practice in alignment with the Dental Board of Australia's registration standards, policies codes and guidelines.
- Providing all staff including agency or locum workforce with job descriptions, responsibilities, performance expectations and supervision where required.
- Providing all staff with training and development (including on-the-job training) to ensure they have the skills and knowledge relevant to their role within the practice.

All staff are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with all current guidelines of the practice and any updates as they occur.
- Completing all tasks in accordance with their scope of practice, training and guidelines as provided by the practice.
- Completing their duties within the management system at all times.
- Providing quality professional and patient-oriented services in a safe environment.

## Induction Program

Each staff member at **Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** will be asked to complete an induction programme within **two weeks of commencing employment**, to ensure they have an understanding of the way the practice operates and how quality dental care is provided to patients.

Induction will be provided by the **Owner** and will require each staff member to:

- Review policies, guidelines, processes and procedures adopted.
- Complete all tasks in the induction checklist a record of which will be retained by the practice.

## Performance and Skills Management

An effective staff performance management system is critical in ensuring **Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** meets its current obligations and future challenges. The practice assists dental practitioners and staff to deliver high performance by providing:

- Clarity regarding roles through job descriptions (including safety and quality related roles), responsibilities, scope of practice and performance expectations.
- Access to training and development relevant to individual performance areas, professional aspirations and the practices needs.
- Training when new clinical services, procedures or other technology is introduced.
- Access to ongoing safety and quality education and training, including training on the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

A performance review process, which includes a system for determining how high performance should be rewarded, managing performance improvement and identifying poor/unsatisfactory performance is in place. Performance reviews are conducted **every six months** by the **Owner**. Where poor performance has been identified changes will be implemented to reduce the risk of recurrence.

## Quality Management System

Making business decisions and setting guidelines for how the practice operates is important in delivering consistently high-quality dentistry in a safe environment for the patients and staff.

The **Owner of Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** has a Quality Management System as outlined below for monitoring and reporting on the safety and quality of patient care, and takes action to maximise patient quality of care where necessary.

It is the responsibility of the **Owner** to make governance decisions and within this capacity is responsible for the following:

- Considering safety and quality in all business decisions
- Consideration of safety and quality data, and providing all key data to appropriate personnel
- Monitoring the effectiveness of safety and quality performance
- Encouraging and supporting practice performance, including reporting and review of performance indicators

## Risk Management

**Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** are committed to the principles of risk management, and maintains an organisation-wide risk register, which includes identified risks, risk assessment, risk rating and risk controls. The **owner** will monitor and regularly evaluate risks, and take action to ensure that risks are minimised.

## Work, Health & Safety (WH&S)

**Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** are committed to providing appropriate dental services in a safe, secure and supportive environment ensuring the welfare, health and safety of its employees, patients, and any persons that may be affected by its operations.

To secure a safe work environment, **Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** promises to pursue effective practices in WH&S, ensuring that all workplace hazards are identified, the associated risks assessed (using an organisation-wide risk register) and appropriate measures are introduced to control these risks. Staff consultation will be sought throughout employment in regard to the WH&S policies.

We encourage patients and staff to raise any concerns they may have. If a concern is raised, all staff and management are required to address the concern as soon as possible. For further information about our commitment to safety refer to **Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** 's Work, Health & Safety policies and procedures.

## Incident Management System

**Brisbane General and Laser Dentists** promotes a work culture that values the reporting and investigation of incidents (near misses) or prevailing unsafe conditions.

All staff will be provided with training and support that will assist them to identify, report and appropriately respond to incidents or unsafe conditions. All staff are required to efficiently report on hazards, incidents and other occurrences with a likely adverse risk to health and safety, in a timely manner. Corrective action will be implemented, where appropriate when an incident or near miss occurs.

At regular intervals, the **owner** will review the General Incident Register, any trends identified from this review will be communicated to staff, and action will be taken to reduce potential future incidents.

# Clinical Guidelines

## Introduction

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists are committed to providing dental practitioners and staff access to clinical guidelines designed to improve the quality of healthcare, reduce instances of unnecessary interventions, minimise the risk of harm, and facilitate the successful treatment of patients.

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists 's Clinical Guidelines Policy

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists provides dental practitioners and staff access to clinical guidelines supported by the best available evidence to assist dental practitioners to deliver sound clinical decisions. The **Principal Dentist** will regularly review the availability, currency and relevance of adopted clinical guidelines, and it is expected that dental practitioners will consider clinical guidelines without neglecting clinical judgement.

## Adopted Clinical Guidelines

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists have adopted the following resources to act as clinical guidelines:

- NHMRC Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare
- Guidelines for Infection Control
- Infection Control Manual Template
- Practical Guide to Infection Control
- The Australian Schedule of Dental Services and Glossary
- Therapeutic Guidelines – Oral and Dental
- Australian Prescriber
- PharmaAdvice
- National Prescribing Service
- Australian Medicines Handbook
- AusDI
- Dental Board of Australia's policies and guidelines
- Australian Commission for Safety & Quality in Healthcare website

## Access to Clinical Guidelines

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists provides access to clinical guidelines through the following methods:

- Printed copies
- Access to external website or intranet
- Staff meetings
- Practice newsletter
- Induction/orientation
- Staff training and development

## Monitoring Staff Use of Clinical Guidelines

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists monitors staff use of the clinical guidelines adopted by the practice by:

- Checking that latest hard copy clinical guidelines are in use in the practice
- Talking with staff about the clinical guidelines they use

- Discussing at staff meetings any updates to clinical guidelines
- Using performance reviews and other staff discussions to raise the use of clinical guidelines
- Checking that staff understand how to access online clinical guidelines

# ‘At Risk’ Patients and Escalation of Care

## Introduction

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists are committed to identifying patients considered ‘at risk’ within our community. Patients identified may require additional consideration and care. Processes are in place to ensure early identification of these patients.

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists ’s ‘At Risk’ Patients and Escalation of Care Policy

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists have adopted processes to support the early identification, early intervention and appropriate management of patients at increased risk of harm.

Owner expects dental practitioners and practice staff will identify patients who could be classified ‘at risk’ and will undertake measures to reduce the risk to patients when delivering care.

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists ’s Process for Identifying Patients ‘At Risk’

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists have implemented the following process in order to identify patients who are potentially ‘at risk’:

Considerations that are made about the patients that are treated at Brisbane General and Laser Dentists to determine whether they are at risk include, their age, cultural and linguistic background, their physical and mental capacity, their ability to access and afford dental treatment. They may be at risk due to a language barrier, not being able to follow instruction due to physical limitations, consenting to treatment because of age or limited mental capacity, afford or access treatment due to remoteness or financial restriction. To identify at-risk patients, all patients are to complete a medical history form and to review and update at every appointment to ensure patient records are up-to-date to minimise risk to not only at-risk patients, but all patients. The demographic of the patients that attend our practice includes some elderly patients, some patients with physical and mental disabilities and patients who have migrated to Australia with English being their second language. Risk is minimised through the use of family members who can interpret language, support with decision-making and physically getting around.

The following patients have been identified as potentially being ‘at risk’:

- Persons from a different cultural or linguistic background
- Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders
- Infants and minors
- Persons from rural or remote areas
- Persons from a low socio-economic background

- Persons with limited numeracy and literary capacity
- The elderly
- Physically or mentally impaired
- Medically compromised patients
- Persons with addiction

## Actions to reduce risks to patients

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists takes early action to reduce the risk for patients identified as 'at risk', by providing:

- Ensuring a comprehensive medical/medication history is completed for all patients
- Providing access to interpreter services
- Offering patient information in languages other than English
- Involving family/carers where appropriate
- Providing access for physically impaired patients
- Offering *pro-bono* work
- Referral of patient where appropriate
- Offering after hours appointments
- Providing an emergency/call out service
- Offering a mobile/outreach dental service

## Escalation of Care

In an emergency situation and/or where an individual's health status deteriorates unexpectedly, dental practitioners and practice staff are expected to follow the practice's Escalation of Care Process.

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists' Escalation of Care Process:

### Medical Emergencies

- Call 000 and request an ambulance – outline the nature of the emergency, and your address.
- If a first-aid officer is available, they should provide first-aid treatment.
- Avoid moving the patient unless absolutely necessary.
- If the individual is conscious, offer reassurance while first-aid is being provided.
- Ensure there is a clear path for ambulance officers to access the person.
- Nominate someone to direct emergency services to the building entrance.
- Record the incident in your incident register





# HEALTH RECORDS

## Introduction

Dental practitioners create health records that include dental, medical and medication information that serve the best interests of patients and contribute to the safety and continuity of their dental care.

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists 's Health Records Policy

Dental practitioners have a professional and legal responsibility to create, maintain, retain, transfer, dispose of, correct, provide access, store securely, and safeguard against loss or damage of health records in accordance with relevant standards, guidelines and legislation, including:

- The Dental Board of Australia's Guidelines on Dental Records
- The privacy law, Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner- Australian Privacy Principles
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care – National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists 's Health Records Process

The practice has elected to use **Exact** to ensure that an accurate and integrated patient health record is documented and maintained. Patient health records include dental, medical and medications information.

This system ensures patient health records are readily available to dental practitioners and dental staff at the point of care (in the room where the patient is being treated). This system also allows for systematic review of the contents of a patient's health record as an evidence-base when required.

Access to and dissemination of patient clinical information is restricted to authorised dental practitioners and staff, by:

- Secure storage of files away from patient access
- Locked filing units
- Maintaining a key register for authorised personnel
- Using Individual login details for electronic systems
- Restricting access to the premises
- Installing an alarm system to protect records
- Ensuring electronic records are protected

## Collecting Information

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists has developed and implemented processes for collecting information about pre-existing healthcare associated infections, communicable disease status, known allergies and adverse drug reactions upon presentation of a patient for care. One of the mechanisms for acquiring this information is the collection and recording of a comprehensive medical/medication history to ensure minimisation of risk and adverse reactions/events.

A medical and medication history is required to be obtained for new patients prior to the provision of care and is updated at regular intervals of no more than 12 months.

**Owner** requires dental practitioners to routinely (at each appointment) ask patients for updates to their medical/medication history.

The medical and medication histories are to include at least three patient identifiers, and where appropriate:

- The medical practitioner's name and contact details
- The patient's emergency contact details
- Dental history
- Past and present illnesses and conditions
- Past and present communicable disease status
- Allergies
- Adverse drug reactions
- Present medications
- Identification of 'at risk' groups

# PATIENT RIGHTS

## Introduction

Within Australia, the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights (ACHR) applies to the entire healthcare system, and it allows patients, consumers, families, carers and healthcare providers to have a common understanding of the rights of people receiving healthcare. The rights included in the ACHR relate to access, safety, respect, communication, participation, privacy and consent.

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists 's Patient Rights Policy

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists has developed the following practice specific charter of patient rights that is consistent with the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights.

## Brisbane General and Laser Dentists 's Charter of Patient Rights

### Appointments

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists aims to provide patients with appointments to meet their treatment needs. It is requested patients make an agreed appointment time and date to assist the scheduling process, notifying the practice where this appointment cannot be met. To assist you in providing us with this information we contact patients by:

- Recall system
- Telephone call reminder
- SMS reminder
- Email reminder

The cancellation policy of Brisbane General and Laser Dentists requires 24 hours' notice for cancellation of an appointment. Should the patient cancel without the required notice period, it is at the patient's allocated dentist and practice owner's discretion as to whether a cancellation fee is to be charged, and if so, what this amount may be.

In the event we are unable to accommodate a patient's request for an appointment at a specific time/date, consultation with the treating dental practitioner will be sought. When a patient fails to attend their appointment, communication is made via telephone call to follow-up and reschedule the appointment.

### Safety

All patients are required to complete a full medical and medication history as accurately and completely as possible, to allow practitioners and staff to identify any circumstances that may increase the risks associated with dental care.

In the unlikely occurrence of an adverse event, dental practitioners at Brisbane General and Laser Dentists have a responsibility to be open and honest in communications with the patient involved, and families or carers if applicable.

It is the responsibility of the registered dental practitioner, in accordance with the Dental Board of Australia's Code of Conduct for Registered Health Practitioners, to explain to the patient what happened and why, as well as offering support and advice with regard to how the situation can best be resolved or managed.

### **Open Disclosure**

Upon recognising the occurrence of an adverse event, the dental practitioner will follow our Open Disclosure Process, which aligns with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare's Open Disclosure Framework, as outlined below:

- Act immediately to rectify the problem, if possible, including seeking any necessary help and advice.
- Explain to the patient, in sufficient detail, so the patient understands what has occurred, including the anticipated short-term and long-term consequences.
- Acknowledge any patient distress and provide appropriate support.
- Develop a future management plan for the patient if required.
- Ensure that the patient has access to information about the process for making a complaint.

Sufficient detail is to be recorded in patient records to reflect the information provided to the patient about the incident, associated risks and likely consequences. The dental practitioner will notify the occurrence of the adverse event to their professional indemnity insurer, consistent with the clauses of their policy.

### **Respect**

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists values all patients as a unique person and hope that at all times we can provide dental treatment in a manner that is respectful of their culture, beliefs, values and personal characteristics. Patients are asked to reciprocate this respect by being mindful of all staff and other patients.

### **Communication and decision making**

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists respects the patient's right to receive adequate information to make informed decisions regarding their health and healthcare. Consequently, all staff should continually demonstrate a commitment to providing patients with accessible and understandable information about their treatment and treatment options, including costs, proposed medications and risks involved. We do expect patients to actively participate in decisions and choices about their treatment and dental needs, involving family or carers where required.

This should also include maintaining suitable evidence that patients are fully informed about their proposed treatment and have been a partner in the development of their treatment plan. Such evidence will be monitored through the practice's records monitoring and review processes.

### **Informed Consent Process**

The initial examination of a patient shall be considered 'implied consent' to that procedure based on the booking of an appointment, attendance, and the patient allowing the physical examination to occur. Any subsequent treatment shall require the patient to make an informed decision and consent to the treatment either verbally or in writing depending on the procedure and associated risks.

The dental practitioner who is to perform the treatment is responsible for the following informed consent process in line with the Dental Board of Australia's Code of Conduct for Registered Health Practitioners.

A patient will be:

- Informed (or receive information in some other way) what procedure is being proposed
- Informed (or receive information in some other way) about the possible risks and benefits of the treatment in a form or manner they can understand
- Informed of the risks and benefits of all options
- Afforded the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers that meet with their satisfaction
- Afforded sufficient time (if needed) to discuss the plan with their family, carer or advisor, especially for complex treatment plans
- Fully informed of and comprehending the cost of treatment
- Able to use the information provided to help them make a decision they believe is in their best interest, in the absence of any coercion from the dental practitioner
- Afforded the opportunity to communicate their decision to the dental practitioner either verbally or in writing

Dental practitioners are required to provide relevant documentation to the patient about the proposed treatment. The practice also requires dental practitioners to use their clinical judgement to determine where written consent is required from the patient and/or carer.

Dental practitioners shall take into account additional considerations regarding guardianship arrangements for consent matters when dealing with vulnerable patients.

Sufficient detail is to be recorded in patient records to reflect the information provided to the patient associated with their treatment options and the treatment plan, which is ultimately agreed upon.

#### **Informed consent documentation**

All informed consent documentation used is reviewed at regular intervals and any updates to these documents are designed to improve patient understanding and the quality of care provided.

#### **Privacy**

In accordance with the privacy law, Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988, the Dental Board of Australia's Code of Conduct for Registered Health Practitioners, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner- Australian Privacy Principles and a patient can expect their personal health and other information will be collected, used, disclosed and stored in accordance with relevant laws about privacy, and this information will remain confidential unless the law allows disclosure or the patient directs us to release the information.

The Privacy Policy of Brisbane General and Laser Dentists consists of the following:

- All information collected from the patient will be used for the purpose of providing treatment. Personal information such as name, address and health insurance details will be used for the purpose of addressing accounts to the patient, as well as processing payments and writing to the patient about any issues affecting their treatment.
- We may disclose a patient's health information to other health care professionals, or require it from them if, in our judgement, it is necessary in the context of the patient's treatment. In this event, disclosure of personal details will be minimised wherever possible.
- We may also use parts of a patient's health information for research purposes, in study groups or at seminars as this may provide benefit to other patients. Should that happen, a patient's personal identity would not be disclosed without their consent to do so.
- Patient history, treatment records, X-rays and any other material relevant to treatment will be kept and remain in a secure environment.
- Under the privacy law, patients have rights of access to dental information held about them by this practice. We welcome a patient to inspect or request copies of their treatment records at any time, or seek an explanation from the dentist. The following procedure has been developed to ensure that all requests for access are dealt with as efficiently as possible:
  - All requests for access (other than straightforward requests for copies of test or treatment results made to your dentist during your consultation) should be made in writing using (where available) a Request for Release of Dental Records Form.
  - Requests for access will be acknowledged by the practice within one week of the receipt of the request.
  - Where it is not possible for access to be granted within 30 days, the patient will be notified/advised when and if access will be granted.
  - Where access is refused, the patient will be advised in writing of the reasons for refusal. This will include any information about other means by which access may be facilitated.
  - A patient will not be permitted to remove any of the contents of their dental file from the practice, nor will they be permitted to alter or erase information contained in the dental record. However, if any of the information we have about a patient is inaccurate, a patient is encouraged to ask us to alter their records accordingly, in writing.
  - When a request for copies of dental records is received, a fee may be required to be paid by the patient.
  - Generally, records will be transferred by the practice (on behalf of consenting patients) from one treating practitioner to another. In limited circumstances patients will be required to collect their records in person or may request in writing that records are provided to another authorised person.

- If a patient, or authorised person, is collecting a copy of dental records, they may be required to provide identification. Where possible this should be photographic identification.

### Comment

A patient's evaluation of the care received at our practice is an extremely important form of feedback that provides valuable information about the services we provide. We encourage patients to provide both positive and negative feedback.

All staff will be provided with training and support that will assist them to identify, report and appropriately respond to complaints and other negative feedback. At Brisbane General and Laser Dentists we classify negative feedback into three categories:

1. **Enquiries:** low level matters where an explanation or clarification of circumstances satisfies or resolves the patient's concerns. No further risk or future action against the dental practitioner or practice is indicated
2. **Notification:** a complication or incident that has not caused the patient to make any complaint or claim, but has the potential to become a complaint or claim in the future. The dental practitioner involved will consult their professional association in these matters for guidance on handling the incident and whether notification to the professional indemnity insurer is required. The dental practitioner's management of such complications or incident will be compatible with the practice's open disclosure process.
3. **Complaint or Claim:** matters in which a patient, or person on behalf of the patient, has made a verbal or written complaint to the practitioner or to a statutory or legal body, regarding some element of treatment that has been provided by the dental practitioner to the patient. The dental practitioner involved will consult their professional association and their professional indemnity insurer prior to responding to the matter.

In the event of a patient complaint, all staff at Brisbane General and Laser Dentists should use the following complaint handling policy:

- Provide an open environment for a patient to share their dissatisfaction with us directly, whilst respecting the patient's right to have a concern heard by an independent third party such as the Dental Board of Australia.
- Resolve the complaint at the lowest level possible.
- A patient will be required to place serious complaints or requests for refunds in writing.
- Notification to and advice sought from professional associations and professional indemnity insurers is encouraged.

### Complaint Handling Process

Complaints will be acknowledged and responded to in a timely manner, either verbally or in writing, in respect to the seriousness of the complaint. We aim to respond to all complaints within 2-3 business days. All complaints will be recorded in the Compliments & Complaints Register.

All complaints will be reported and reviewed by the Owner of the practice. Responsibility for the management of practitioner related complaints will lie with the dental practitioner about whom the complaint is related. The dental practitioner involved will respond to the complaint upon receipt of advice from their professional association and/or their insurer.

### Complaints Review Process



Brisbane General and Laser Dentists is committed to continuous improvement in safety and quality. The Owner will analyse data/feedback from the Compliments & Complaints Register and take action where required. Any review actions/outcomes will be communicated to staff.

#### Notifying patients about their rights

Brisbane General and Laser Dentists will always endeavour to advise patients about their rights and the way our practice operates. Part of the process of providing this information to patients and/or carers is providing access to our practice Charter of Patient Rights.

All staff will assist patients to understand their patient rights and the way our practice operates. It is the responsibility of staff to proactively identify those patients who may be 'at risk' of not understanding their healthcare rights and to consult the dental practitioner if further guidance is needed.

Our Charter of Healthcare Rights is made available to patients in the following ways:

- Poster/signage displayed within the practice

## Document details

**The NSQHS measures covered in this policy:** 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 1.6.1, 1.6.2, 1.7.1, 1.7.2, 1.8.1, 1.8.2, 1.8.3, 1.9.1, 1.9.2, 1, 1.10.1, 1.10.2, 1.10.3, 1.10.4, 1.10.5, 1.11.1, 1.11.2, 1.12.1, 1.14.1, 1.14.2, 1.14.3, 1.14.4, 1.14.5, 1.15.1, 1.15.2, 1.15.3, 1.15.4, 1.16.1, 1.16.2, 1.17.1, 1.17.2, 1.17.3, 1.18.1, 1.18.2, 1.18.3, 1.19.1, 1.19.2, 3.13.1, 4.6.1, 4.6.2, 4.7.1

**Responsible person:** Rui Gao

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