

## Patient Consent for E-mail Communication

Dialysis Management Clinics Inc's ("DMC") vision is to model the future of healthcare. A key aspect in modelling the future of healthcare involves ensuring our team is accessible to our patients. This means offering patients the opportunity to communicate with DMC through a variety of means and in ways that is accessible and familiar to them.

Transmitting patient information through email can pose several risks of which patient / family members should be aware. Understanding the risks involved will help patients / family members in their decision making around the use of these communication tools. The risks include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- The privacy and security of email communication cannot be guaranteed.
- Employers and online services may have a legal right to inspect and keep emails that pass through their system.
- Email is easier to falsify than handwritten or signed hard copies. In addition, it is impossible to verify the true identity of the sender, or to ensure that only the recipient can read the email once it has been sent.
- Emails can introduce viruses into a computer system, and potentially damage or disrupt the computer.
- Email can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored or even changed without the knowledge or permission of the nurse or the patient. Email senders can easily misaddress an email, resulting in it being sent to many unintended and unknown recipients.
- Email is indelible. Even after the sender and recipient have deleted their copies of the email, back-up copies may exist on a computer or in cyberspace.
- Use of email to discuss sensitive information can increase the risk of such information being disclosed to third parties.
- Email can be used as evidence in court.

### Conditions of using email

The nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of email information sent and received. However, because of the risks outlined above, the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of email communication and will not be liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not the direct result of intentional misconduct of the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC. Thus, patients must consent to the use of email for patient information. Consent to the use of email includes agreement with the following conditions:

- Emails to or from the patient concerning diagnosis or treatment may be made part of the patient's medical record.
- The nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC may forward emails internally to other members of DMC and to those involved, as necessary, for diagnosis, treatment, health care operations, and other handling. The nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC will not, however, forward emails to independent third parties without the patient's prior written consent, except as authorized or required by law.
- Although the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC will endeavour to read and respond promptly to an email from the patient, **the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC cannot guarantee that any particular email will be**

**read and responded to within any particular period of time. Thus, the patient should not use email for medical emergencies or other time-sensitive matters.**

- Email communication is not an appropriate substitute for clinical examinations or in-person visits. The patient is responsible for following up with the appropriate health provider where warranted.
- If the patient's email requires or invites a response from the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC and the patient has not received a response within a reasonable time period it is the patient's responsibility to follow up to determine whether the intended recipient received the email and when the recipient will respond.
- The patient should not use email for communication regarding sensitive medical information, such as sexually transmitted disease, AIDS/HIV, mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse.
- The patient is responsible for informing the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC of any types of information the patient does not want to be sent by email, in addition to those set out in the bullet above.
- The nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC is not responsible for information loss due to technical failures.

### **Patient acknowledgement and agreement**

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand this consent form. I understand the risks associated with the communication of email between any nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC and me, and consent to the conditions outline herein, as well as any other instructions that the nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC may impose to communicate with patients by email. I acknowledge any nurse, health provider, or administrative team member of DMC's right to, upon the provision of written notice; withdraw the option of communicating through email. Any questions I may have had were answered.

The information provided on this form was discussed with me by a member of my care team. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I am satisfied with the explanations and understand them.

Signature of: \_\_\_\_\_  
(y/m/d)       Patient  Substitute Decision Maker      Print Name      \_\_\_\_\_      Date

Please note: a substitute decision maker is a person authorized under PHIPA to consent on behalf of an individual to disclose personal health information about the individual.