

Disclosure of Health and Personal Information by Email

Policy

This policy covers appropriate use of email sent from Communication Disorders Clinic personnel. There is no mechanism to ensure the privacy of health information disclosed by email.

Therefore, the following directives apply:

1. Individually identifiable health information will not be communicated via email to any entity, including clients, healthcare providers, or third parties.
2. Health information without client identifiers may be shared among colleagues or treatment team members.
3. Clarification regarding clinical services may be provided in response to a query by a client. The determination of the amount of information to be disclosed is retained by the clinician, in addition to whether or not email is the appropriate method of communication. Mail from Appalachian State University is not encrypted. The client should be told prior to sending any email communication.
4. Email may be used to request a return for follow-up care, provided no health information is communicated.
5. Confirmation of a client's visit or other queries concerning a client to the Communication Disorders Clinic may be shared with a requesting clinical educator responsible for the client. The client's initials may be used in an email.
6. All client information must be in a password-protected document.

Procedural guidelines include:

1. When relevant to on-going treatment and/or care of a client, a copy of a sent message is to be placed in his/her clinic chart under "Correspondence" with a corresponding notation in the Clinic Notes.
2. All email between client and clinician shall contain language allowing clients to "escalate" to a phone call or office visit. "If you have any questions regarding this email, you are always welcome to respond by email, phone or come to the office for a visit."
3. Email responses to clients' questions shall be formatted to include the message of the question as well as the response, provided the question does not contain protected health information.
4. The email policy is available on the Communication Disorders Clinic web site and supports the Communication Disorders Clinic Privacy Policy.

Golden Rule for Email

Do not put anything in an email that you would not put on a postcard.

All email from the Communication Disorders Clinic should contain the following:

This message and its attachments may contain confidential information that is intended for the sole use of the addressee(s). Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution of the information contained in this message and its attachments is prohibited. If you have received this message or any of its attachments in error, please destroy all originals and copies of the same and notify the sender immediately.