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DATA POLICY

- Patient records are held in a variety of formats:
 - Paper records for sight test and contact lens clinical records.
 - Spectacle prescription and dispensing information may be held as paper or in data format
 - Recall dates are held in the practice management software.
 - Photographic information (retinal and anterior segment) is held in the imaging software.
 - Visual Field records may be held as paper, as data in the VF software or as images within the imaging software.
- All personal information contained on practice records, whether paper or electronic, is considered confidential.
- The Practice Manager is responsible for procedures relating to confidentiality
- No personal information will be discussed with anyone other than the patient without the patient's permission.
- Patients are given a copy of their spectacle prescription immediately following their sight test.
- If a patient is referred, they are given a written statement that they are being referred, with a reason [*e.g. "cataract" written on the GOS2 or similar private form*].
- Patients are given a copy of their contact lens specification on completion of the fitting process.
- Where a patient has diabetes or glaucoma, the GP is informed of the result of the sight test.
- Care is taken that records are not seen by other people in the practice.

- All practice staff have a confidentiality clause within their contracts.
- All staff are aware of the importance of ensuring and maintaining the confidentiality of patients' personal data and that such data must be processed and stored in a secure manner.
- The practice is registered with the Information Commissioner
 - Registration No.Z5472483
 - Security No. 10215610
- The Practice complies with the eight data protection principles under the Data Protection Act 1998 in its processing of personal data in that such data is:
 - fairly and lawfully processed
 - processed for limited purposes
 - adequate, relevant and not excessive
 - accurate and up to date
 - not kept for longer than is necessary
 - processed in line with patients' rights
 - secure
 - not transferred to other countries without adequate protection
- Confidential paper information requiring destruction is shredded.
- When computers are replaced, old hard drives are securely erased or physically destroyed.
- Records are retained for periods as described in the record retention policy below.
- Records due for destruction are to be shredded.
- The practice displays the following as a part of the information poster in the waiting room:

Information - we keep records of our information about you as a mixture of paper and/or computer records. Everyone in the practice is aware of the confidential nature of these records and will only use or release this information in accordance with the law. If you are an NHS patient, the NHS may ask to see the portion of your record that relates to NHS services provided. Such information will only be given to the NHS in strictest confidence. If you wish to see your records, please ask The Practice Manager

RECORD RETENTION

- This policy applies to the following:
 - Spectacle records
 - Contact lens records
- All records are retained for 7 years from the date of last seeing the patient.
- Records of children (under 18 years) are retained until they are 25 AND it is 7 years since they were last seen.
- Records of the deceased are kept for 10 years.
- Records are destroyed by shredding.

Examples:

Age at last test	Time to retain record
Age 5	Until age 25
Age 10	Until age 25
Age 17	Until age 27
Over 18	For 7 years

Handling requests for Rx and clinical information

Spectacle Prescription (Spec Rx) or Contact Lens Specification

Where a patient requests a copy of their own, or their child's spectacle prescription or contact lens specification this should be provided. It should be double checked for accuracy and signed by a qualified optician. Such information may be collected or posted to the patient. It may also be emailed to their personal email address if they so request.

Contact Lens Specification

Where a 3rd party supplier requests the verification of a contact lens specification they should provide the following details:

- Patient's full name and address
- Full specification including parameters and power of the lenses
- An expiry date of the specification
- The name or registration number of the person signing the specification

We will only confirm if these details are correct or not and no further confirmation will be supplied without the consent of the patient.

Requests from another optician for spec Rx information

In all cases you should be satisfied that the patient has consented to the transfer of the information. That may be obvious and implicit "the patient is on holiday elsewhere and has broken their glasses", but if not, ask for confirmation from the patient. The request should be noted on the patient's record.

Requests from another optician for clinical information

The optician should satisfy themselves that the request is for the clinical and health benefit of the patient and should conduct the phone conversation and provide the information themselves. They should also be satisfied that the patient has consented to the transfer of information.

Requests by us for clinical or spec Rx information.

These requests will be made by the optician personally.

Communicating Patient Identifiable Data

Patient data may be communicated in the following ways:

By ordinary 1st or 2nd class post

- This will be in a sealed envelope

By email:

Patient consent is required for sending data that can identify a patient except where both sender and recipient have NHS emails ending in @nhs.net.

Emails will carry a message stating:

This e-mail contains proprietary confidential information some or all of which may be legally privileged and or subject to the provisions of privacy legislation. It is intended solely for the addressee. If you are not the intended recipient, you must not read, use, disclose, copy, print or disseminate the information contained within this e-mail. Please notify the author immediately by replying to this e-mail and then delete the e-mail.

Verbally

- With care that confidentiality is maintained
- The recipient of the information is identified
- A note is made on the record.
- Information that could result in errors will be communicated in writing where possible

Backup Policy

Back-ups take place to external hard drives using remote company servers on a daily basis. The remote servers/DAT drive uses the grandfather/father/son system with off site storage which is secure .