

Handling Complaints

Complaints are an opportunity to improve practice protocols and procedures

Effective handling of complaints can be very beneficial and has two components:

- External resolution with the patient
- Internal resolution with the staff/protocol involved

Practices should have processes in place for complaints received by patients and the public. Every complaint should be acknowledged, investigated and corrective action taken.

Administering a complaints register is an effective way of documenting all complaints received, and should cover the description, action taken and the outcome. Ideally, the Practice Manager or a nominated staff member should investigate each incident and record them in the register. Complaints registers should be reviewed regularly, and should be an agenda item in regular staff meetings to ensure all staff members are aware of any incident that has occurred, the action taken in rectifying the situation, and recommendations given to avoid similar situations occurring in the future.

The following points should be considered when investigating a complaint:

- Whether the complaint is a result of system or human error
- If previous complaints have been made against the system / staff member previously
- If barriers exist to rectifying the situation and how to overcome these
- If further assistance is required, whether internal or external
- Immediate discussion with any implicated practice member

Once the situation is rectified, steps should be taken to notify the complainant and to update to systems / procedures.

Most complaints can be resolved by the Practice in consultation with the complainant as long as patients feels that their concerns have been listened to.

Practice Information Sheets should list the appropriate complaints body if the patient wishes to take their complaint further.