

### 4.20 Transportation of Patient Records

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**Purpose:**

Patient records must be maintained in a safe and secure environment. Everyone dealing with personal health information in any manner shall take reasonable precautions to protect patient records from unauthorized viewing and environmental hazards.

**Policy:**

1. Patient information may include formats other than written files. All information including but not limited to dictated tapes, computer discs and voicemail messages should each have appropriate safeguards in place. Only the minimum amount of personal health information required for the purpose of the communication should be disclosed. Patient information received in any of these forms should be deleted as soon as possible.
2. There may be need to transport patient records internally within a facility - individual facility policies prevail such as internal faxing, use of tube-stations, or charts accompanying patients.
3. Patient information, including patient identifiers, should be protected from unauthorized, inappropriate or unnecessary viewing:
  - i) Avoid leaving patient information, such as charts, in public areas.
  - ii) Extra precaution should be taken to avoid posting patient information in public areas, including patient schedules and room assignment boards.
  - iii) Faxing should only be utilized when information is required for urgent, emergent or current care and should not be used as a substitute for regular mailing or other distribution. Ensure that the receiver is an authorized person (“trustee”). All faxes should have a confidentiality disclaimer on the cover page and to call in case of error in transmission.
  - iv) Written communication should be marked “confidential”. Envelopes containing personal information should be marked “confidential” and sealed.
  - v) When entering a patient’s home ensure that all other patient records are maintained in a secure manner.
4. If employment requires patient files to be removed from a facility, these safeguards should be considered:

- i) A policy for a sign-out procedure will ensure accurate location of the patient files.
- ii) The patient record should be transported securely or locked in a safe environment (e.g. trunk, locked briefcase).
- iii) The minimum amount of patient information should be transported offsite (could the report be written without the total file).
- iv) Patients identifiers should be minimized for security reasons (e.g. patient initials).
- v) When entering a patient's home only his/her file should accompany you at all times.

**In transporting patient records in any manner the physiotherapist must assess the potential for breach of confidentiality through loss, theft and access by unauthorized persons. The level of risk should be determined by the physiotherapist and measures undertaken to reduce the level of risk.**