

Purpose

To provide a procedure for the request and approval for access to medical records for research and audit purposes.

Target Audience

All Barwon Health staff including agency staff, contractors, volunteers, students, monitors and external auditors and researchers, with regard to all medical records across Barwon Health.

Definitions

Digital Medical Record (DMR): Digital storage and viewing of a patient's medical record, combining information entered directly into an electronic system and information created using paper which is scanned on completion of an episode of care in a digitally viewable format. The system for viewing the DMR at Barwon Health is BOSSnet.

Medical record: All health and personal information recorded regarding a patient, irrespective of its method of capture, including paper, scanned documentation and information entered directly into electronic systems, across all services within Barwon Health.

Paper medical records: Records created before the implementation of the Digital Medical Record (DMR). These records are not back-scanned or held on site and must be requested to be viewed.

Research: Any project that aims to produce new knowledge, including Quality Assurance, Quality Improvement or Audit activities and where there is an intention to publish or otherwise present the data beyond the hospital staff. These projects must be submitted for ethics oversight to the Barwon Health Research Ethics Governance and Integrity Unit (REGI)

Procedure

Overview

Personal and health information contained in medical records is protected by relevant privacy and confidentiality legislation.

Many Barwon Health staff have access to medical records in the course of their professional duties. However, when access is required for the purpose of research (as defined above) or to comply with external monitoring and auditing of research, there are additional legislative and ethical considerations.

Prior to accessing medical records all persons are required to read and sign the Barwon Health [Privacy Confidentiality and Security Agreement Brochure](#).

Requests for access to medical records for the purpose of research must be formally acknowledged by REGI or approved by the Barwon Health Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Requests to access medical records from external auditors and monitors, for the purpose of auditing or monitoring approved research, are exempt from further REGI review. However, these requests should be accompanied by a Barwon Health HREC approval certificate. Information about ethics and governance oversight is available on the [REGI website](#).

Access to **DIGITAL MEDICAL RECORDS**

System username or passwords must not be shared under any circumstances and all access to digital Medical Records must comply with the [Security of Information Procedure](#).

Information should not routinely be printed from the electronic medical record unless, notification has been provided and prior approval obtained from Knowledge and Information Services (K&IS) via an SSA authorisation, or REGI approval. Notification can be included in section 9 of the SSA 'departments/location' by stating 'printing required for verification' in the K&IS section of the form. All print outs should be marked 'This is a true copy of the BH DMR, not for scanning'.

Barwon Health staff, volunteers, agency staff and contractors:

- Requests for access to the DMR are made to the Barwon Health Help Desk Services using the '[Application for new users \(online\)](#)' form.

External researchers and students

- Must read and sign the Barwon Health [Privacy Confidentiality and Security Agreement Brochure](#).
- Ethics oversight through REGI may be required unless an exemption is acknowledged by REGI
- Require a Barwon Health Associate Researcher (BHAR).
- The BHAR can apply for access to the DMR for external persons using the [Application for new users \(online\)](#) form. Where Barwon Health specific information is required in this form, such as employee number, please add 'not applicable' and explain they are an external user in the comments section.
- The BHAR or delegate is also responsible for ensuring that all access is terminated at the completion of the project/audit by logging a 'Self Service Helpdesk ticket' through BH IT, requesting the cessation of all system access.

Auditors and monitors:

- Must read and sign the Barwon Health [Privacy Confidentiality and Security Agreement Brochure](#).
- The Principal Investigator (PI), or delegate, is responsible for applying for access to the DMR for external persons using the [Application for new users \(online\)](#) form. Where Barwon Health specific information is required in this form, such as employee number, please add 'not applicable' and explain they are an external user in the comments section.
- The PI, or delegate, is also responsible for ensuring that all access is terminated at the completion of the project/audit by logging a 'Self Service Helpdesk ticket' through BH IT, requesting the cessation of all system access.

Access to **PRE EXISTING PAPER MEDICAL RECORDS**

These records are stored securely off site and a formal request must be made to retrieve these records for viewing.

Information should not be photocopied unless, notification has been provided and prior approval obtained from Knowledge and Information Services (K&IS) via an SSA authorisation, or REGI approval. Notification can be included in section 9 of the SSA 'departments/location' by stating 'photocopying required for verification' in the K&IS section of the form. All photocopies should be marked 'This is a true copy of the BH MR, not for scanning'. However, under no circumstances can information be added to, or removed from the paper medical record.

Paper medical records cannot be viewed outside of K&IS and must not be removed from the department without K&IS management approval.

Records will be kept in K&IS for a maximum of two weeks only before they will be re-filed. If records are required to be held longer, K&IS management approval must be obtained.

Barwon Health staff, volunteers, agency staff and contractors:

- Requests must be made in writing using the [Request for Access to Medical Records](#) form available on Prompt or from K&IS reception.
- Requests can be sent to K&IS by mail, in person or via fax (03 4215 1242) with a minimum of **48 hours' notice**.
- For some research projects it may be appropriate to add K&IS to the Site Specific Assessment (SSA) form. Researchers should seek advice from the research governance officer.

K&IS may request evidence of ethics approval prior to release of paper medical records.

Students:

- Complete the [Request for Access to Medical Records](#) form.
- Have the above form signed by their supervisor.
- Present their ID card in person to K&IS staff when presenting to view records.

External researchers:

- Must read and sign the Barwon Health [Privacy Confidentiality and Security Agreement Brochure](#).
- Seek ethics oversight through REGI.
- Require a Barwon Health Associate Researcher (BHAR).
- The BHAR can request access to paper medical records using the [Request for Access to Medical Records](#) form.

Monitors and auditors

- Must read and sign the Barwon Health [Privacy Confidentiality and Security Agreement Brochure](#).
- Principal Investigator (PI), or delegate, can request access to paper medical records using the [Request for Access to Medical Records](#) form.

Evaluation

Audits, regular document revision and review of relevant 'RiskMan' Reports.

Key Aligned Documents

[New User Application Form \(online\)](#), WAVELENGTH Barwon Health intranet site: IT Service Desk
[Privacy Confidentiality & Security Agreement Brochure](#), PROMPT: Barwon Health\Knowledge and Information Services\H.I.S.

[Privacy Policy](#), PROMPT: Barwon Health\Knowledge and Information Services\H.I.S.

[Request for Access to Medical Records Form](#), PROMPT: Barwon Health\Knowledge and Information Services\H.I.S.

[Request for Access to Medical Records](#), [Procedure] PROMPT: Barwon Health\Knowledge and Information Services\H.I.S.

[Security of Information](#), [Procedure] PROMPT: Barwon Health\Knowledge and Information Services\H.I.S.

[Use and Disclosure of Information Policy](#), PROMPT: Barwon Health\Organisational Services\Barwon Health Board of Directors

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Key Legislation, Acts & Standards

Health Records Act 2001 (VIC). Version No. 028. Version incorporating amendments as at 15 October 2014 Retrieved April 7, 2015 from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/hra2001144/

Health Services Act 1988. (VIC). Version No. 145. Version incorporating amendments as at 15 October 2014. Retrieved April 8, 2015 from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/hsa1988161/

Privacy Act 1988. (Cwlth). Compilation No. 65 Registered 25, March 2015. Retrieved April 2, 2015 from <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2014C00757>

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (VIC). (NO. 60 OF 2014). Retrieved April 7, 2015 from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/num_act/padpa201460o2014317/

References

Barwon Health. (2014). Research ethics, governance & integrity (REGI) unit. Retrieved April 8, 2015 from <http://www.barwonhealth.org.au/research/column-1/regi>

Contributors

	Name	Position	Service / Program
Lead Reviewer:	Michelle Martella	Senior Healthcare Information Advisor	Knowledge and Information Services
Contributors:	Samantha Napier	IS Team Leader	Knowledge and Information Services
	Alana Sarah	Clinical Trial Manager	Clinical Trial Unit, Acute Services
	Donna Campbell	Research Manager (Senior Advisor)	Geelong Cardiology Research Unit
	Giuliana Fuscaldo	Manager	Research Ethics, Governance and Integrity Unit (REGI)
Committee/s:	N/A		