Alert for Electronic Communications

E-mail Correspondence

Patients/research participants or personal representatives who want to communicate with their clinician/researcher by e-mail should consider all of the following issues before signing an Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information via Electronic Media:

1. E-mail at UF can be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others.
2. E-mail communication is a convenience and not appropriate for emergencies or time-sensitive issues.
3. Highly sensitive health or Personal Information should not be communicated by e-mail (i.e., HIV status, mental illness, chemical dependency, worker compensation issues, financial account information, Social Security numbers, etc.)
4. Employers generally have the right to access any e-mail received or sent by a person at work.
5. Staff other than the health care provider may read and process e-mail.
6. Clinically relevant messages and responses will be documented in the patient’s health record.
7. Communication guidelines must be defined between the clinician/researcher and the patient/research participant, including,
   a. How often e-mail will be checked,
   b. Instructions for when and how to escalate to phone calls and office visits, and
   c. Types of transactions appropriate for e-mail.
8. E-mail message content must include:
   a. The subject of the message in the subject line, i.e., Prescription Refill, Appointment Request, etc., and
   b. Clear patient/research participant identification including name, telephone number and record identification number in the body of the message.
9. UF will not be liable for information lost or misdirected due to technical errors or failures.

Video and Audio Conferences

Patients/research participants or personal representative who participate in teleconferences with their clinician/researcher should consider all of the following issues before signing an Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information via Electronic Media:

Although interactive video and audio teleconferences use equipment and telecommunications line which have been approved for secure use by the Health Science Center Information Technology Department, complete privacy and security cannot be guaranteed. Pertinent personal information, including HIV status, mental illness, chemical dependency, substance abuse, developmental, genetic, and worker’s compensation issues may be communicated during the teleconference.

Staff other than health care providers may have access to the teleconference recordings and transmissions.

The University of Florida will not be liable for information lost or misdirected due to technical errors or failures.