

# Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

## CORPORATE OFFICE

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### RE Official information request CDHB 9994

We refer to your email dated 3 December 2018 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB.

**1. Does the DHB have a policy in place regarding the use of smartphones/smartphone apps like WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Messenger for the recording and sharing of clinical information?**

The Canterbury DHB has a policy which includes portable computing. It includes Smartphones but does not specifically mention apps. Please refer to **Appendix 1** (attached).

**2. If yes, what is the policy? If not, why not?**

The current policy states (relevant extracts):

*"The use of portable, handheld or mobile devices (eg tablets, laptops, smart phones) to access Canterbury DHB information or information systems must be managed.*

*User identification and authentication must occur before the device is allowed to connect to the Canterbury DHB network and information systems.*

*Confidential and sensitive information stored on portable devices must be protected from unauthorised viewing, e.g. by use of encryption. This includes storage of information on devices such as portable memory keys.*

*Access to confidential and sensitive Canterbury DHB information stored on portable computing devices must be secured via physical or logical power-on or log-on controls, where available."*

**3. How frequently would you say this is happening among clinicians?**

The Canterbury DHB has two applications in this space specifically for clinical information sharing needs: Cortex (clinical task management) and CELO (messaging). These applications have been positively received and are well used.

**4. Is it just a sign of the times; a more efficient way of sharing information?**

**5. What efforts are made to ensure patient privacy if/when sharing information through personal/work smartphones?**

Electronic communication is very efficient way of communicating but we need to be sure patient info is safe. To that end we have rolled out Celo\* which is secured and encrypted. Uptake has been promising. In addition we are in process of deploying Cortex\*\* which enables communication in secure environment. Both these can be deployed on peoples devices with appropriate levels of security. CELO has mechanisms to ensure that only clinicians involved in the care of the patient can access information and includes a digital patient consent process. All data is encrypted and no information is stored on the device. \*<https://www.celohealth.com/> \*\*<http://www.cortex.co.nz/About>

All staff are bound by confidentiality and non-disclosure of information policies including, access to Canterbury DHB electronic systems, the use of information technology (which includes computers mobile phone, data cards, memory sticks etc) and the Health Information Privacy code 1994.

<https://www.privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/codes-of-practice/health-information-privacy-code-1994/>

In the process of delivering the best service to patients, clinicians may take photos to monitor aspects of their care. This can be a particularly expedient form of communication between clinicians. Examples can include photos of skin lesions or burns to get expert advice or short videos of seizures supplied by families to help with accurate diagnosis.

Any photos are then stored within a secure environment within the DHB system, with access limited to certain users and added to the health records.

As always with patient privacy any benefits of using smartphone technology will be balanced against the risks.

Please refer to **Appendix 2** (attached) for communications sent from the Canterbury DHB Chief Medical Officer to Senior Medical Officers (SMOs) regarding the protection of patient information. Please note that information which is out of scope of your question has been redacted. We have also redacted information under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act i.e. *"...to protect the privacy of natural persons, including those deceased"*.

Information pertaining to the NZ Medical Council 'Use of the internet and electronic communication' can be found on the following link.

<https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/News-and-Publications/Statement-on-use-of-the-internet-and-electronic-communication-v2.pdf>

**6. Have any clinicians been reprimanded for the way they have used their smartphone/tablet to record or share patient information?**

We are not aware of any clinicians who have been reprimanded for the way they have used their smartphone/tablet to record or share patient information.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

If you disagree with our decision to withhold information you may, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act, seek an investigation and review of our decision from the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz); or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Canterbury DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Macfarlane', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melissa Macfarlane  
**Acting Executive Director**  
**Planning, Funding & Decision Support**