



RACGP

RACGP e-health unit

Policy template

Practice policy on the use of clinical coding terminologies in the practice clinical software system

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has developed a range of draft policy templates for general practices to adapt to their individual practice needs when registering and complying with the requirements for the eHealth Practice Incentive Program (ePIP).

The policy templates cover:

- secure messaging delivery
- clinical coding terminologies
- electronic transfer of prescriptions.

These policies are to be used as a guide and must be individualised to suit your organisation's particular needs. Do not implement these policies without first considering the specific needs of your organisation.

The policy templates have been developed with current knowledge as of January 2013. The College recommends that these policies will need to be regularly reviewed as new information comes to light and with the planned release, in June 2013, of the RACGP *Computer and information security standards* (CISS) second edition and CISS workbook.

In relation to all other computer and information security issues, until the release of the second edition of CISS, practices are advised that the current edition of the CISS (2011) is still best practice in providing guidance in information and security protection.

Disclaimer

The information set out in this document is intended for use as a guide of a general nature only and may or may not be relevant to particular practices or circumstances. Nor is this document exhaustive of the subject matter. Persons adopting or implementing any procedures and/or recommendations contained in this document must exercise their own independent skill or judgement or seek appropriate professional advice relevant to their own particular circumstances when so doing. While the text is directed to health professionals possessing appropriate qualifications and skills in ascertaining and discharging their professional (including legal) duties, it is not to be regarded as clinical advice and compliance with any procedures and/or recommendations cannot of itself guarantee discharge of the duty of care owed to patients and others coming into contact with the health professional and the premises from which the health professional operates.

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Name of practice:

Practice policy on the use of clinical coding terminologies in the practice clinical software system

Purpose

To ensure that important elements of patients' health information is recorded in their health record consistently and regardless of the provider they see. The clinical terminologies used are based on agreement by the practice and/or the practice team.

Related standards

RACGP Standards for general practice, fourth edition – Criterion 1.7.2, Indicator C, p. 52

Our practice has documented standardised clinical terminology (such as coding) which the practice team uses to enable data collection for review of clinical practice.

Background and rationale

Using consistent clinical coding terminologies will support better utilisation of searchable chronic disease registers and avoid confusion that can result from 'free text' descriptions in the health record. Best practice is the use of medical vocabulary that can be mapped against a nationally recognised disease classification or terminology system.

Practice procedure

Our practice:

- discourages the use of free-text coding for the recording of all important diagnoses and current and past clinical history in patients' health records
- is working towards consistent recording by encouraging the use of agreed clinical coding terminologies by using, for example, a 'pick list' or 'drop down box' function in the clinical desktop system
- uses clinical coding terminologies, at a minimum, for all 'active patients' of the practice¹
- provides practice-based education and skills-based training to all healthcare providers and staff to ensure compliance with the policy and competency in the use of the technology.

Software requirements

The clinical desktop system used in our practice is:

(List clinical software)

The medical vocabulary used in the clinical desktop system is:

(List medical vocabulary)

Staff responsibility

It is the responsibility of all healthcare providers in our practice, where clinically relevant, to use the 'pick list' or 'drop-down box' capability and reduce the unnecessary and/or inappropriate use of 'free text'.

¹ The definition of an 'active' patient is a patient who has attended the practice three (3) or more times in the past two (2) years.

It is the responsibility of all administrative staff to support the use of clinical coding terminologies by undertaking any administration tasks involved in the maintenance or use of the clinical desktop system. When any problems arise with the clinical desktop system software within our practice, the appropriate software vendor and/or the company providing IT support for the practice will be contacted to assist in resolving the problem in a timely manner.

Related resources

RACGP *Standards for general practices*, fourth edition

www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/standards/standardsforgeneralpractices/

RACGP *Computer and information security standards (CISS) and workbook* (2011)

www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/e-health/cis/ciss/

PIP eHealth Product Register

www.nehta.gov.au/pip