



Steps to take when closing a practice/preparing for the future

It is important for practices to take the necessary steps to ensure continuity of care for patients when closing a practice. In addition, unforeseen circumstances can occur at any time, for example, the unexpected death of a practitioner that results in a practice having to close. Knowing what needs to be done and making sure all staff are aware of the procedure to follow will reduce stress at the time and ensure your patients are kept informed.

The Board recommends that the following steps be taken when closing a practice –

1. A letter or email should be sent to patients advising them of the upcoming or unexpected closure of the practice and what is to happen to their patient records.
2. Notice of the closure needs to be placed in local publications, indicating where patients may gain access to and/or request transfer of their records.
3. Notice of the closure should be left at the practice address for as long as possible after the closure, informing patients where they may gain access to and/or request transfer of their records.
4. The practice owner (or other staff member as necessary) should attempt to negotiate transfer of the records to another local practice, where they can be stored securely and be readily accessed as necessary by patients who may or may not decide to become a patient of that practice.
5. Notification of the practice closure and where records have been transferred or are being stored should be lodged with the Board, in the event that patient enquiries about the closure are received.

Health providers have a legal responsibility under the Privacy Act 1993 and Health Information Privacy Code 1994 to ensure that health records are securely stored and are also able to be readily accessed, on written request, by health consumers. If you are not familiar with these responsibilities or wish to refresh your memory, please visit the website of the Privacy Commissioner located at www.privacy.org.nz