

# Notice of Privacy Practices

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL CENTER



## About this notice

This Notice will tell you about the ways we may use and disclose health information that identifies you (“Health Information”). We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of Health Information. We are required by law to maintain the privacy of Health Information that identifies you; give you this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your Health Information; and follow the terms of our Notice that are currently in effect. This Notice covers the faculty physician practices of Columbia University Medical Center (“Columbia University”, “Columbia”, “we” or “us”), including its employed faculty physicians and faculty physicians practicing on Columbia University owned or leased space, as well as their clinical support staff. This Notice also covers Columbia University Health Care, Inc.; the Ophthalmology Faculty Practice Corporation; Orthopedics, P.C.; Neurosurgery, P.C.; and Urology, P.C. (all “Columbia University”). If Columbia physicians or health care professionals provide you with treatment or services at another location, for example New York Presbyterian Hospital, the Notice of Privacy Practices you receive at such other location will apply.

## How we may use and disclose health information about you

The following categories describe different ways that we may use and disclose Health Information.

### For Treatment

We may use Health Information about you to provide you with medical treatment or services. We may disclose Health Information to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, or other personnel who are involved in taking care of you. For example, a doctor treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes, because diabetes may slow the healing process. Different departments of Columbia University also may share Health Information such as prescriptions, lab work and x-rays to coordinate your treatment. We also may disclose Health Information to people outside Columbia University who may be involved in your medical care.

### For Payment

We may use and disclose Health Information so that we may bill for treatment and services you receive at Columbia University and can collect payment from you, an insurance company or another third party. For example, we may need



to give your health plan information about your treatment in order for your health plan to pay for such treatment. We also may tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment. In the event a bill is overdue we may need to give Health Information to a collection agency as necessary to help collect the bill or may disclose an outstanding debt to credit reporting agencies.

### **For Health Care Operations**

We may use and disclose Health Information for health care operations purposes. These uses and disclosures are necessary to make sure that all of our patients receive quality care and for our operation and management purposes. For example, we may use Health Information to review the treatment and services you receive to check on the performance of our staff in caring for you. We also may disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, medical students, and other personnel for educational and learning purposes. The entities and individuals covered by this Notice also may share information with each other for purposes of our joint health care operations.

### **Appointment Reminders/Treatment Alternatives/Health-Related Benefits and Services**

We may use and disclose Health Information to contact you to remind you that you have an appointment for treatment or medical care, or to contact you to tell you about possible treatment options or alternatives or health related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

### **Fundraising Activities**

We may use your demographic information to contact you in an effort to raise money for Columbia. Any fundraising letter you receive from us will provide you with instructions on how to opt out of any future fundraising letters. We will not use your diagnosis to fundraise unless you authorize us to do so in writing.

### **Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care**

We may release Health Information to a person who is involved in your medical care or helps pay for your care, such as a family member or friend. We also may notify your family about your location or general condition or disclose such information to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort.

### **Research**

Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose Health Information for research purposes. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health and recovery of all patients who received one medication to those who received another, for the same condition. Before we use or disclose Health Information for research, however, the project will go through a special approval process. This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of Health Information to balance the benefits of research with the need for privacy of Health Information. Even without special approval, we may permit researchers to look at records to help them identify patients who may be included in their research project or for similar purposes, so long as they do not remove or take a copy of any Health Information.

### **As Required by Law**

We will disclose medical information about you when required to do so by international, federal, state or local law.

### **To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety**

We may use and disclose Health Information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Any disclosure, however, will be to someone who may be able to help prevent the threat.

### **Business Associates**

We may disclose Health Information to our business associates that perform functions on our behalf or provide us with services if the information is necessary for such functions or services. For example, we may use another company to

perform billing services on our behalf. All of our business associates are obligated, under contract with us, to protect the privacy of your information and are not allowed to use or disclose any information other than as specified in our contract.

### **Organ and Tissue Donation**

If you are an organ or tissue donor, we may release Health Information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank, as necessary, to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.

### **Military and Veterans**

If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release Health Information as required by military command authorities. We also may release Health Information to the appropriate foreign military authority if you are a member of a foreign military.

### **Workers' Compensation**

We may release Health Information for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

### **Public Health Risks**

We may disclose Health Information for public health activities. These activities generally include disclosures to: a person subject to the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") for purposes related to the quality, safety or effectiveness of an FDA-regulated product or activity; prevent or control disease, injury or disability; report births and deaths; report child abuse or neglect; report reactions to medications or problems with products; notify people of recalls of products they may be using; a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition; and the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence and the patient agrees or we are required or authorized by law to make such disclosure.

### **Health Oversight Activities**

We may disclose Health Information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws.

### **Lawsuits and Disputes**

If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose Health Information in response to a court or administrative order. We also may disclose Health Information in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

### **Law Enforcement**

We may release Health Information if asked by a law enforcement official for the following reasons: in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons or similar process; limited information to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person; about the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement; about a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct; about criminal conduct on our premises; and in emergency circumstances to report a crime, the location of the crime or victims, or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.

### **National Security and Intelligence Activities and Protective Services**

We may release Health Information to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counter-intelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose Health Information to authorized federal officials so they may conduct special investigations and provide protection to the President, other authorized persons and foreign heads of state.

### **Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors**

We may release Health Information to a coroner, medical examiner or funeral director so that they can carry out their duties.

### **Inmates**

If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release Health Information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be if necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) the safety and security of the correctional institution.

### **How to Learn About Special Protections for HIV, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Genetic Information**

Special privacy protections apply to HIV-related information, alcohol and substance abuse information, mental health information, and genetic information. Some parts of this general Notice of Privacy Practices may not apply to these types of information. If your treatment involves this information, you may contact the Privacy Officer for more information about the protections.

### **Other Uses of Health Information**

Other uses and disclosures of Health Information not covered by this Notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. You may revoke your permission at any time by submitting a written request to our Privacy Officer, except to the extent that we acted in reliance on your permission.

## **Your Rights Regarding Health Information About You**

You have the following rights, subject to certain limitations, regarding Health Information we maintain about you:

### **Right to Inspect and Copy**

You have the right to inspect and copy Health Information that may be used to make decisions about your care or payment for your care. We may charge you a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request.

### **Right to Request Amendments**

If you feel that Health Information we have is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information and you must tell us the reason for your request. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for Columbia. A request for amendments must be submitted, in writing, to the Privacy Officer at the address provided at the end of this notice.

### **Right to an Accounting of Disclosures**

You have the right to request an "accounting of disclosures" of Health Information. This is a list of certain disclosures we made of Health Information. The first list you request within a 12 month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list.

### **Right to Request Restrictions**

You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the Health Information we use or disclose for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the Health Information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. We are not required to agree to your request. If we agree, we will comply with your request unless we terminate our agreement or the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment.

### **Right to Request Confidential Communications**

You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you by mail or at work. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will accommodate reasonable requests.

### **Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice**

You have the right to a paper copy of this Notice, even if you have agreed to receive this Notice electronically. You may request a copy of this Notice at any time. You may obtain a copy of this Notice at our web site, <http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/hipaa/>.

### **How to Exercise Your Rights**

To exercise your rights described in this Notice, send your request, in writing, to our Privacy Officer at the address listed at the end of this Notice. Alternatively, to exercise your right to inspect and copy Health Information, you may contact your physician's office directly. To obtain a paper copy of our Notice, contact our Privacy Officer by phone or mail.

### **Changes To This Notice**

We reserve the right to change this Notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed Notice effective for Health Information we already have as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of the current Notice at each Columbia physician office or outpatient location and on our website. The end of our Notice will contain the Notice's effective date.

### **Complaints**

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with Columbia or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with Columbia, contact our Privacy Officer at the address listed at the end of this notice. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.



## **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER**

### **Questions**

If you have a question about this Privacy Notice, please contact:

### **Privacy Officer**

Office for HIPAA Compliance

### **Columbia University Medical Center**

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