



OPEN DISCLOSURE BROCHURE

Information for patients, carers and families about adverse events and open disclosure

What are adverse events?

Providing health care can be a very complicated process requiring highly skilled professionals. While everything is done to ensure that high-quality and safe care is provided to all patients, sometimes things go wrong and unanticipated outcomes might occur.

At **Chelsea Heights Day Surgery (CHDS)** we refer to these incidents as adverse events and take them very seriously. Very rarely, these might complicate recovery or even harm patients.

What causes adverse events to occur?

Sometimes adverse events occur because someone has made a mistake or a unique flaw has appeared in a process or system that had not been evident before. Although these types of adverse events often get a lot of publicity in the media, they are extremely rare when one considers just how many procedures and episodes of health care occur each year in Victorian hospitals.

On most occasions the outcome just could not be anticipated. This is perhaps because of the very nature of illness and disease and the complexity of health care as we know it today.

What do we do about adverse events?

Although rare, every adverse event at **CHDS** is documented and recorded. We have a number of committees and processes that are responsible for investigating adverse events and ensuring that we learn from these and put in place any necessary changes to prevent these from occurring again.

Our aim is to continually improve to ensure the health care we deliver is the best it can be.

Extensive research has been undertaken throughout the world into the causes of adverse events and what can be done to reduce their frequency and impact. The research has found that there are some key principles to managing adverse events that are important to ensure that our staff are confident to admit when something has gone wrong and do not 'cover up' adverse events. This would prevent us from being able to conduct investigations and make sure the factors contributing to the adverse event will not occur again.

We call this the 'no-blame approach' and it is very important to ensure that our staff feel comfortable about speaking up about adverse events so we can continually improve our systems and processes.

It also ensures that we:

- learn from the event and put in place changes to make sure it doesn't occur in the future and continue to evaluate any changes to ensure that they have the necessary effect
- share information with the patient and, with permission, the family or carers. Open disclosure is the name we give to the process of sharing all information with the patient.

We have adopted these principles as a part of our overall adverse event management program. If you are involved in an adverse event, you can expect to be informed about it quite quickly after it occurs.

What can I expect if an adverse event happens to me?

You will be told about the adverse event by your doctor as soon as possible after it has occurred. It is most likely that at the time you are informed, we will not have all the information at hand but we will advise you about what we are doing to obtain more information.

If you are not in a condition to receive the information, for example you are still recovering from an anaesthetic, we will inform the person named by you on your admission form. If there is anyone in particular who you want to be contacted, you should advise us. Your privacy and confidentiality are paramount and we will only speak to those people who you have consented to.

Often patients are aware that something might have gone wrong and should discuss any concerns with their treating doctor. If we are aware of an adverse event, we will talk to you about setting up a



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formal meeting. This way, you can have any family members or carers present and ask any questions you like. It is quite natural to feel angry and disappointed and you should express your feelings to those present.

What happens next?

This will depend on the nature of the adverse event. You might require further surgery either during this admission or at a later time. You will be informed about what to expect next at the meeting but should ask any questions you need to. We will also ensure that you have the name and phone number of someone in the hospital to contact should you have further questions.

At times we arrange further follow-up meetings and sometimes the patient goes home and we provide further information via letter or a phone call once the results of any investigations are available. You will be given a choice of how you wish to receive the information.

You will also be able to talk to your doctor or someone familiar with your case after discharge.

Can I take things further?

Once the open disclosure process is complete, you might feel satisfied about the process and happy to continue to communicate with your doctor. You also have the right to take the matter further.

You may also access the internal complaints management process of the hospital by either letter or phone by contacting:

Complaints Officer
Marlee Foo
03 9771 7111

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 48–72 hours and then a more detailed response letter will follow. Through this process, we can also arrange for further meetings with senior managers of the hospital and/or your doctor if you require.

You also have the right to obtain a copy of your medical record and can do so by contacting the hospital's health information service at the same address above.

The Health Services Commission provides an external service for patients and families dissatisfied with the service.

Contact details are:

Health Services Commissioner Complaints and Information Telephone: (03) 8601 5200 Toll-free: 1800 136 066

Or write to:

Health Services Commissioner 30th floor, 570 Bourke St Melbourne Vic., 3000

Fax no.: (03) 8601 5219 TTY no. 1300 550 275 E-mail: hsc@dhs.vic.gov.au

It is not appropriate for the hospital to advise you of your legal rights. If you are concerned about these rights, you are encouraged to contact your legal adviser.