

## Notice of Privacy Practices

As Required by the Privacy Regulations Created as a Result of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)  
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.

### A. OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY

Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your individually identifiable health information (PHI). In conducting our business; we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We are also required by law to provide you with a notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our practice concerning your PHI. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the notice of privacy practices that we have in effect at the time.

We realize these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following information:

- How we may use and disclose your PHI
- Your privacy rights in your PHI
- Our obligations concerning the use and disclosure of your PHI

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your PHI that are created or retained by our practice. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment in the past, and for any of our records that we may create or maintain in the future, our practice will post a current copy of our most current Notice at any time.

### B. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:



### C. WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI) IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

#### THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PHI.

**1. Treatment.** Our practice may use your PHI to treat you. For example, we may ask you to have laboratory test (such as blood or urine test), and we may use your PHI in order to write a prescription for you, or we might disclose your PHI to a pharmacy when we order a prescription for you. Many of the people who work for our practice- including, but not limited to, our doctors and nurses-may use or disclose your PHI to order to treat you or to assist others in your treatment.

**2. Payment.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in order to bill and collect payment for the services and items you may receive from us. For example, we may contact your health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits (and for what range of benefits), and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover or pay for your treatment. We also may use and disclose your PHI to obtain payment from third parties that may be responsible for such costs, such as family members. Also, we may use your PHI to bill you directly for services and items. We may disclose your PHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in the billing and collection efforts.

**3. Health Care Options.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to operate our business. As examples of the ways in which we may use and disclose your information for our operations, our practice may use your PHI to evaluate the quality of care you received from us, or to conduct cost management and business planning activities for our practice. We may disclose your PHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their health care operations.

**4. Appointment Reminders.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment.

**5. Treatment Options.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives.

**6. Health-Related Benefits and Services.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

**7. Release of Information to Family/Friends.** Our practice may release your PHI to a friend or family member that is involved in your care, or who assists in taking care of you. For example, a parent or guardian may ask the babysitter to take their child to their pediatrician. This person would receive PHI due to the fact that they were taking care of the child.

**8. Disclosures Required By Law.** Our practice will use and disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by federal, state or local law.

### D. USE AND DISCLOSURES OF YOUR PHI IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The following categories describe unique scenarios in which we may use if we disclose your identifiable health information:

**1. Public Health Risks.** Our practice may disclose your PHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:

- Maintaining vital records, such as births and deaths
- Reporting child abuse or neglect
- Preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability
- Notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease
- Reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices
- Notifying individuals if a product or device they may be using has been recalled
- Notifying appropriate government agencies and authorities regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient (include domestic violence); however, we will only disclose this information if the patient agrees or we are required/authorized by law to disclose this information.
- Notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to work place injury or illness or medical surveillance.

**2. Health Oversight Activities.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil administrative and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and the health care system in general.

**3. Lawsuits and Similar Proceedings.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We may also disclose your PHI in response to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made effort to inform you of the request or to obtain an order protecting the information the party has requested.

**4. Law Enforcement.** We may release your PHI if asked to do so by law enforcement officials:

- **Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement**
- **Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct**
- **Regarding criminal conduct at our office**
- **In response to a warrant, summons, court order, subpoena or similar legal process**
- **To identify/locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive or missing person**
- **In an emergency, to report a crime (including the location or victims(s) of the crime, or the description, identity, or location of the perpetrator).**

**5. Deceased Patients.** Our practice may release your PHI to a medical examiner or coroner to identify a deceased individual or to identify the cause of death. If necessary, we may also release information in order for funeral directors to perform their jobs.

**6. Organ and Tissue Donation.** Our practice may release your PHI to organizations that handle organs, eye or tissue procurement or transplantation, including organ donation banks, as necessary to facilitate organ tissue donation and transplantation if you are an organ donor.

**7. Research.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI for research purposes in certain limited circumstances. We will obtain your written authorization to use your PHI for research purposes **except when** an Internal Review Board or Privacy Board has determined that the waiver of your authorization satisfies the following:

- **An adequate plan to protect the identifiers from improper use and disclosure;**
- **An adequate plan to destroy the identifiers at the earliest opportunity consistent with the research (unless there is a health or research justification for retaining the identifiers or such retention is otherwise required by the law);**
- **Adequate written assurances that the PHI will not be re-used or disclosed to any other person or entity (except as required by law) (1) for authorized oversight of the research study, or for other research for which the use or disclosure would otherwise be permitted (2) the research could not practicably be conducted without the waiver (3) the research could not practicably be conducted without access to and use of the PHI.**

**8. Serious Threats to Health and Safety.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.

**9. Military.** Our practice may disclose your PHI if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces (including veterans) and if required, by the appropriate authorities.

**10. National Security.** Our practice may disclose your PHI to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law. We may disclose your PHI to federal officials in order to protect the President, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.

**11. Inmates.** Our practice may disclose your PHI to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosure for these purposes would be necessary: **(a)** for the institution to provide health care services to you **(b)** for the safety and security of the institution **(c)** to protect the health and safety of other individuals.

**12. Workers Compensation.** Our practice may release your PHI for Workers Compensation and similar programs.

#### **E. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI**

You have the following rights regarding the PHI that we maintain about you:

**1. Confidential Communications.** You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location. For instance, you may ask that we contact you at home. In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request to **gerstenberg.clinic 2645 Nall Street Port Neches, Texas 77651, 409-210-3336** specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our practice will accommodate **reasonable** requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.

**2. Requesting Restrictions.** You have the right to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment or health care options. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your PHI to certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and/or friends. **We are not required to agree to your request;** however, if we do agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies, or when the information is necessary to treat you. In order to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI you must make a written request to our office and describe the request in a clear and concise fashion.

- **the information you wish restricted**
- **whether you are requesting to limit our practice's use, and disclosure or both**
- **to whom you want the limits to apply**

**3. Inspection and Copies.** You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the PHI that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records, but not including psychotherapy notes. You must submit your request in writing to our office in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your PHI. Our practice may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, labor and supplies associated with your request. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances; however, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

**4. Amendment.** You may ask us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by us for our practice. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to our office. You must provide us with a reason that supports your request for an amendment. Our practice will deny your request if you fail to submit (and the reason supporting your request) in writing. Also, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion: **(a) accurate and complete; (b) not part of the PHI kept by or for the practice; (c) not part of the PHI which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; (d) not created by our practice, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.**

**5. Accounting of Disclosures.** All of our patients have the right to request an "accounting of disclosures." An "Accounting of Disclosures" is a list of certain non-routine disclosure our practice has made of your PHI for non-treatment, non-payment or non-operations purposes. Use of your PHI as part of the routine patient care in our practice is not required to be documented. For example, the doctor shares information with the nurse; or the billing department using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to our office. All requests for an "accounting of disclosures" must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. The first list you request within a 12 month period is free of charge, but our practice may charge you for the additional lists within the same 12 month period. Our practice will notify you of the costs involved with the additional request, and may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.

**6. Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice.** You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our Notice of Privacy Practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice please contact our office.

**7. Right to File a Complaint.** If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our practice or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint it must be submitted in writing. **You will not be penalized for writing a complaint.**

**8. Right to Provide an Authorization for Other Uses and Disclosures.** Our practice will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide to use regarding the use and disclosure of PHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons described in the authorization. Please note, we are required to retain records of your card.

For any questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact us.