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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.

I. OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

This information is called “**protected health information**” or “**PHI**”. This Notice describes your rights as our patient and our obligations regarding the use and disclosure of PHI. We are required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy of PHI about you;
- Give you this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI; and
- Comply with the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practices that is currently in effect.

We reserve the right to make changes to this Notice and to make such changes effective for all PHI we may already have about you. If and when this Notice is changed, we will post a copy in our office in a prominent location. We will also provide you with a copy of the revised Notice upon your request made to our Privacy Official.

II. HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU. USES AND DISCLOSURES FOR TREATMENT, PAYMENT, AND HEALTH CARE OPERATIONS.

Treatment: We may use and disclose PHI about you to provide, coordinate or manage your health care and related services. We may consult with other health care providers regarding your treatment and coordinate and manage your health care with others. For example, we may use and disclose PHI when you need a prescription, lab work, a x-ray, or other health care services. In addition, we may use and disclose PHI about you when referring you to another health care provider. For example, if you are referred to another physician, we may disclose PHI to your new physician regarding whether you are allergic to any medications.

We may also disclose PHI about you for the treatment activities of another health care provider. For example, we may send a report about your care from us to a physician that we refer you to so that the other physician may treat you.

Payment: We may use and disclose PHI so that we can bill and collect payment for the treatment and services provided to you. Before providing treatment or services, we may share details with your health plan concerning the services you are scheduled to receive. For example, we may ask for payment approval from your health plan before we provide care or services. We may use and disclose PHI to find out if your health plan will cover the cost of care and services we provide. We may use and disclose PHI to confirm you are receiving the appropriate amount of care to obtain payment for services.

We may use and disclose PHI for billing, claims management and collection activities. We may disclose PHI to insurance companies providing you with additional coverage. We may disclose limited PHI to consumer reporting agencies relating to collection of payments owed to us.

We may also disclose PHI to another health care provider or to a company or health plan required to comply with the HIPAA Privacy Rule for the payment activities of that health care provider, company or health plan. For example, we may allow a health insurance company to review PHI for the insurance company’s activities to determine the insurance benefits to be paid for your care.

Health Care Operations: We may use and disclose PHI in performing business activities, which are called health care operations. Health care operations include doing things that allow us to improve the quality of care we provide and to reduce health care costs.

If another health care provider, company, or health plan that is required to comply with the HIPAA Privacy Rule has or once had a relationship with you, we may disclose PHI about you for certain health care operations of that health care provider or company. For example, such health care operations may include reviewing and improving the quality, efficiency and cost of care provided to you; reviewing and evaluating the skills, qualifications, and performance of health care providers; providing training programs for students, trainees, health care providers, or non-health care professionals; cooperating with outside organizations that evaluate, certify, or license health care providers or staff in a particular field or specialty; and assisting with legal compliance activities of that health care provider or company.

We may also disclose PHI for the health care operations of an “organized health care arrangement” in which we participate. An example of an “organized health care arrangement” is the joint care provided by a hospital and the doctors who see patients at the hospital.

Communication From Our Office: We may contact you to remind you of appointments and to provide you with information about treatment alternatives or other health related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES WE CAN MAKE WITHOUT YOUR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Uses and Disclosures for Which You Have the Opportunity To Agree or Object. We may use and disclose PHI about you in some situations where you have the opportunity to agree or object to certain uses and disclosures of PHI about you. If you do not object, then we may make these types of uses and disclosures of PHI.

Individuals Involved In Your Care or Payment for Your Care: We may disclose PHI about you to your family members, close friend, or any other person identified by you if that information is directly relevant to the person's involvement in your care or payment for your care. If you are present and able to consent or object (or if you are available in advance), then we may only use or disclose PHI if you do not object after you have been informed of your opportunity to object. If you are not present or you are unable to consent or object, we may exercise professional judgment in determining whether the use or disclosure of PHI is in your best interests. For example, if you are brought into this office and are unable to communicate normally with your physician for some reason, we may find it is in your best interest to give your prescription and other medical supplies to the friend or relative who brought you in for treatment. We may also use and disclose PHI to notify such persons of your location, general condition, or death. We also may coordinate with disaster relief agencies to make this type of notification. We also may use professional judgment and our experience with common practice to make reasonable decisions about your best interests in allowing a person to act on your behalf to pick up filled prescriptions, medical supplies, x-rays, or other things that contain PHI about you.

OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES WE CAN MAKE WITHOUT YOUR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION OR OPPORTUNITY TO AGREE OR OBJECT

We may use and disclose PHI about you in the following circumstances without your authorization or opportunity to agree or object, provided that we comply with certain conditions that may apply.

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES CONTINUED

Required By Law: We may use and disclose PHI as required by federal, state, or local law. Any disclosure complies with the law and is limited to the requirements of the law.

Public Health Activities: We may use or disclose PHI to public health authorities or other authorized persons to carry out certain activities related to public health, including the following activities:

- To prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
- To report disease, injury, birth, or death;
- To report child abuse or neglect;
- To report reactions to medications or problems with products or devices regulated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration or other activities related to quality safety, or effectiveness of FDA-regulated products or activities.
- To notify a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease in order to control who may be at risk of contracting or spreading the disease; or
- To report to your employer, under limited circumstances, information related primarily to workplace injuries or illness, or workplace medical surveillance.

Abuse, Neglect, or Domestic Violence: We may disclose PHI in certain cases to proper government authorities if we reasonably believe that a patient has been a victim of domestic violence, abuse or neglect.

Law Enforcement: Under certain conditions we may disclose PHI to law enforcement officials for the following purposes where the disclosure is:

- Required by law;
- In response to a court order, warrant, subpoena, summons, administrative agency request or other authorized process;
- To identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
- About a crime or suspected crime committed at our office.

Coroners, Medical Examiners, Funeral Directors: We may disclose PHI to a coroner or medical examiner to identify a deceased person and determine the cause of death. In addition, we may disclose PHI to funeral directors, as authorized by law, so that they may carry out their jobs.

Organ and Tissue Donation: If you are an organ donor we may use or disclose PHI to organizations that help procure, locate, and transplant organs in order to facilitate an organ, eye or tissue donation and transplantation.

Specialized Government Functions: Under certain circumstances we may disclose PHI:

- For certain military and veteran activities, including determination of eligibility for veterans for veterans benefits and where deemed necessary by military command authorities;
- For national security and intelligence activities;
- For the health or safety of inmates and others at correctional institutions or other law enforcement custodial situations for the general safety and health related to corrections facilities.

Required by HIPAA Privacy Rule: We are required to disclose PHI to the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services when requested by the Secretary to review our compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule.

Workers' Compensation: We may disclose PHI as authorized by Workers' Compensation laws or other similar programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION REQUIRE YOUR AUTHORIZATION

All other uses and disclosures of PHI about you will only be made with your written authorization. If you have authorized us to use or disclose PHI about you, you may revoke your authorization at any time, except to the extent we have taken action based on the authorization.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

Under federal law you have the following rights regarding PHI about you:

Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request additional restrictions on the PHI that we may use for treatment, payment and health care operations. You may also request additional restrictions on our disclosure of PHI to certain individuals involved in your care that otherwise are permitted by the Privacy Rule. You may also request that any part of your protected health information not be disclosed to family members or friends who may or may not be involved in your care. We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree to your request, we are required to comply with our agreement except in certain cases, including where the information is needed to treat you in case of an emergency. To request restrictions you must make your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. In your request, please include the information you want restricted, how you want to restrict the information and to whom you want the restrictions to apply.

Right to Receive Confidential Communications: You have the right to request that you receive communications regarding PHI in a certain manner or at a certain location. For example, you may request that we contact you at home rather than at work. You must make your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. You must specify how you would like to be contacted (for example by regular mail to your post office box and not your home). We are required to accommodate reasonable requests.

Right to Inspect and Copy: You have the right to request the opportunity to inspect and receive a copy of PHI about you in certain records that we maintain. This includes your medical and billing records. We may deny your request to inspect and copy PHI only in limited circumstances. To inspect and copy PHI please contact our Privacy Official. If you request a copy of PHI about you we may charge you a reasonable fee for the copying, postage, labor and supplies used in meeting your request.

Right to Amend: You have the right to request that we amend PHI about you as long as such information is kept by or for our office. To make this type of request you must submit your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. You must also give us a reason for your request. We may deny your request in certain cases including if it is not in writing or if you do not give us a reason for the request.

Right to Receive an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an "accounting" of certain disclosures that we have made of PHI about you. This is a list of disclosures made by us during a specified period of up to 6 years other than disclosures made for treatment, payment and health care operations. If you wish to make such a request please contact our Privacy Official identified on the last page of this Notice.

COMPLAINTS or QUESTIONS - If you believe your privacy rights have been violated you may file a complaint with us or the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our office or if you have any questions please contact our Privacy Official:

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(Notice of Privacy Practices available in large print upon request.)

This notice was published and first became effective on March 1, 2003.