

POLICY: Patient Confidentiality

PURPOSE: To protect patient information and maintain patient confidentiality.

Policy:

The UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program upholds the highest standards regarding patient confidentiality. Residents, faculty, medical students and administrative staff may have access to confidential medical records and patient account information on a need to know basis in the course of employment, performance improvement, research, or education/training. All such information is confidential in accordance with patient medical record and information confidentiality laws, rules and regulations. Confidential information shall not be disclosed or otherwise made available to any other person other than the affected patient or appropriate persons involved with the medical care of the patient, research activity or educational process. All discussions of patients among members of the health care or educational team shall be limited to settings removed from the public ear (e.g. not in elevators, hallways, cafeterias, etc.)

All patient information, including pictures taken via cell phones, utilized for presentations or scenarios for educational purposes should be de-identified whenever possible. De-identification includes removal of all names, geographic locations (city and state), telephone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses, social security numbers, medical record and account numbers, health plan beneficiary numbers, certificate or license numbers, facial photographic images, and any other unique identifying number, characteristic or code.

“Confidential information” denotes all information acquired in the course and scope of employment obtained by discussion, consultation, examination, treatment, and/or direct access to records. This includes, but is not limited to, hospital, medical, or computer records and may include any information held in patient files or any electronic medical record or patient account record.

Pictures taken on cell phones or any other electronic devices must be downloaded and placed into the patient’s medical record, destroyed after use (if used for educational purposes), or downloaded into a protected UCSF Fresno file within the residency training or fellowship training program to ensure patient confidentiality.

Faculty, residents, medical students, and administrative staff are expected to abide by the policies and procedures established in each institution in which they work/learn regarding patient confidentiality.

A violation of this policy may result in corrective action up to and including termination of employment or training. A misuse of medical data and/or inappropriate release or disclosure of information may also result in monetary loss and/or prison term for violation of medical privacy, as covered under Federal law (HIPAA).

(Original signed Policy is available in the UCSF Fresno Office of Medical Education)