

# Privacy Statement

## **POLICY ON MANAGEMENT OF PERSONAL AND HEALTH INFORMATION**

The Victorian Cytology Service (VCS) is a government funded pathology laboratory primarily responsible for reporting cervical cytology tests.

The management and staff of VCS appreciate that sensitive personal and health information is held by the organisation. The organisation has strict confidentiality practices in place and all staff are required to abide by these. All visitors who during the course of their visit may potentially observe personal and health information sign a confidentiality statement.

All information is managed on the premises of VCS. Backup tapes of the information system and some test slides are stored in a secure facility off-site. No personal information is provided to sub-contractors, other than to contracted debt collection agencies.

### **How is personal and health information collected?**

Personal and health information held by VCS is collected from the health care practitioner that orders the pathology test.

Where an individual offers information directly to VCS, this may also be entered to the individual's health record.

### **What personal and health information is held?**

The policy of VCS is that only information relevant to the performance of its work will be held by the organisation.

Personal information held by VCS may include the name (current and previous), date of birth, current and previous addresses, email address, phone numbers, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity status, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, and Medicare Number for each individual on whom the organisation reports a pathology test. The name, address and Medicare Provider Number of the health care practitioner ordering the pathology test is held. Clinical information provided by the health care practitioner ordering the test is also held. This may include a description of current or previous symptoms or health status. VCS holds the results of all pathology and screening tests performed by VCS.

In the case of Pap smears reported by VCS, associated colposcopy, histopathology and other relevant pathology results from health practitioners and other laboratories are obtained via the Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry.

### **How is personal and health information used?**

The personal and health information held about an individual is used for the following purposes:

- i. to assist in the reporting the pathology test that has been ordered;
- ii. for charging for those services (where appropriate);
- iii. for research to improve our knowledge, particularly of how to better prevent cancer of the cervix in women. No research publication identifies an individual person.

- iv. To provide statistical data to support the Victorian Cancer Action Plan 2008 – 2011 in increasing screening participation rates in specific populations

### **When is personal and health information disclosed?**

Personal and health information about you is disclosed in the following circumstances:

- i. To your health care practitioner who ordered the pathology test.
- ii. At your health care practitioner's request, to another health care practitioner.
- iii. At your practitioner's request, to another laboratory when a further opinion is being sought on a pathology specimen or for pathology tests that has been ordered but which is not performed at VCS.
- iv. In accordance with the Health Insurance Act, to Medicare Australia for the purpose of payment for services for bulk-billed tests such as histology and non-gynaecological cytology.
- v. In accordance with the Health Insurance Act, to Medicare Australia to facilitate payments for the Cervical Practice Incentive Program. (See next section).
- vi. In accordance with section 62 of the Cancer Act, to the Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry for women who reside in Victoria. For women who reside outside of Victoria, information is provided to the relevant Pap Test or Cervical Cancer Screening Register operated by the woman's home state or territory. Where VCS is aware that an objection has been lodged to such notification, then no personal or health information is disclosed.
- vii. In accordance with section 60 of the Cancer Act, to the Victorian Cancer Registry for individuals who reside in Victoria and who are diagnosed with cancer.
- viii. To your representative (eg an authorised representative or lawyer), with your written consent.
- ix. To our legal advisers and insurers.

### **Does my information have to be provided to Medicare Australia?**

The choice is yours. The Government provides additional money to general practitioners if a certain percentage of their female patients are screened regularly. The program is called the Cervical Practice Incentive Program. The program is run by Medicare Australia. Further information about the Cervical Practice Incentive Program is available on the Medicare Australia's website ([www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)).

In order for accurate statistics to be available for each general practitioner, VCS sends information to the Medicare Australia about each woman who has a Pap smear reported by VCS. On a 4 weekly basis, the following information is sent from VCS to Medicare Australia - name, address, date of birth and Medicare Number. This is done after a 4 week delay in order to give you time to notify us that you do not want your information sent to Medicare Australia.

**If you don't wish your information to be sent, please notify us by email ([director@vcs.org.au](mailto:director@vcs.org.au)) or by writing to the following address:**

A/Prof. Marion Saville  
Victorian Cytology Service  
PO Box 178  
CARLTON SOUTH VIC 3053.

Even if you don't want your information to be sent to Medicare Australia, we are still very happy to report your Pap smear and we will continue to offer you our full range of services.

### **How an individual obtains access to their own health information**

Results of pathology tests are normally provided to your health care practitioner who ordered the test. The best way to get your results is in consultation with your health care provider so they can be explained in the context of your health care.

You may, however, request access to information we hold about you. VCS is happy to provide an individual with access to their own health information at no cost.

The following section describes how you should proceed.

- i. The approach to VCS should be in writing (an application form is available on request).
- ii. You should provide sufficient identification so that the authenticity of the request can be considered to be satisfactory by the Executive Director of VCS.
- iii. Upon lodgement of a request, the Executive Director of VCS will oversee the process whereby the personal and health information is made available to you.
- iv. The personal and health information will be provided in printed form to you or alternatively you may visit the VCS to personally view your records by appointment.
- v. VCS will respond to these requests within 10 working days of receipt of the request.

### **How to make a complaint regarding your privacy?**

If you wish to make a complaint to VCS about its activities with regard to your privacy then this should be done in writing to VCS:

#### **Contact Details for VCS:**

Postal Address: The Executive Director  
Victorian Cytology Service  
PO Box 178  
Carlton South VIC 3053  
Email: [director@vcs.org.au](mailto:director@vcs.org.au)  
Telephone: 03-9250-0300  
Fax: 03-9349-1949

Alternatively, you may wish to direct your complaint to the Health Services Commissioner.

#### **Contact Details for the Health Services Commissioner:**

Postal Address: Health Services Commissioner  
30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
570 Bourke Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Email: [hsc@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:hsc@dhs.vic.gov.au)  
Telephone: 1800-136-066