



## Dr Dean v d Westhuizen

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## Complaints Policy and Form

### Purpose of this Policy

This policy is intended to provide a mechanism for patients and others with whom the practice interact to address any concerns or complaints in an efficient and consistent manner, with the aim of solving matters in an amicable manner, prior to approaching other complaints bodies. This policy forms part of the terms and conditions of the practice. By visiting the practice and agreeing to the practice's terms and conditions, all patients agree to follow this policy.

### The Complaints Process

It is advisable to raise a concern or a complaint as and when the specific issue arises. However, this may not always be possible. In general, the practice will deal with complaints as follows:

#### Step 1: Verbal Complaint

1. If possible, the patient / other person complains verbally as and when the issue occurs, to the specific person at hand (e.g. the receptionist, the healthcare professional / practitioner, another staff member, etc.). If raised while in hospital to, for example, a nurse or the hospital liaison officer, they will bring the complaint to the practice's attention.
2. The person at whom the complaint is directed will attempt to address the complaint there and then, if possible.
3. A short note will be kept of the nature of the complaint, the person to whom it was directed and the manner in which the complaint was addressed. This helps the practice improve on matters of concern. This note is NOT kept in the patient's file, and a complaint has no impact on the care provided, or to be provided, to a patient.

#### Step 2: Complaint Form Completion

4. If the matter is unresolved after the verbal stage, the patient / other person complaining will be requested to record the complaint in writing. Please provide as much detail, including supporting documentation, so as to assist in the understanding and resolution of the complaint.
5. It is important that the complaint clearly states what is expected of the practice.
6. The complaint form can be handed in at the practice to the receptionist OR email to our address: [info@nelspruiteye.co.za](mailto:info@nelspruiteye.co.za)

7. The complaint will be considered by Dr Hayes/van der Westhuizen if it is of a healthcare nature, or by the practice manager if it is of a general service, accounts or a non-healthcare nature.
8. The healthcare professional or practice manager may contact the complainant to clarify certain details, to set up an appointment and/or to obtain more information.
9. If the complaint is anonymous (which the practice does not recommend), addressing matters raised would be done to the best judgement of Dr Hayes/van der Westhuizen, as there would be no way of identifying or contacting the complainant, or addressing or correcting any specific matter.

### **Step 3: Resolution**

10. The resolution phase may entail a meeting with the complainant, during which the complainant could explain his/her point of view and the practice could do the same. It could also serve to give feedback to the complainant as to how the practice proposes to- or have resolve(d) the matter, and/or how it will deal with similar matters in future.
11. The complainant will, if s/he needs to, receive time to consider the information provided and/or the proposed solution before the complaint is brought to conclusion.
12. The resolution will be recorded and kept separate from the patient's file. No complaint, irrespective of what the outcome, will affect the care to be received by the patient or his/her family or friends, at the practice.

### **Step 4: Unresolved Complaints:**

#### **Mediation**

13. If a matter remains unresolved, the complainant and the practice will agree on a process of mediation and a mediator
14. The mediator will be contacted by the practice, and the mediator will then explain the process to both the practice and the complainant.
15. The mediator will assist the complainant and the practice to find a mutually acceptable way forward to resolve the complaint.
16. If resolution is not possible, an outside entity may be approached by the complainant.

#### **Referral and Trust**

17. If, based on the nature of the complaint and/or if the relationship of trust between the practitioner and the patient has broken down, the practice may refer the patient to another practice which render similar services.
18. In the case of a referral, only a referral note on the healthcare status of the patient, and nothing else, will be shared with the practitioner to whom the patient is referred.
19. CONFIDENTIALITY All matters pertaining to a complaint will be handled confidentially, and will only be shared if the complainant agrees to such sharing, or if the complainant takes further steps and the practice has to address the complaint at an outside entity.