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References:

Media Policy

PURPOSE

Hospitals and health systems are responsible for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of their patients and patient information. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) mandates regulations that govern privacy standards for healthcare information. The following policy will guide Regional Medical Center (RMC) medical staff, employees and contractors with handling news or other media representatives.

This policy encourages prompt and forthright answers to media inquiries by a designated RMC media spokesperson. This is limited only by RMC's responsibility for patient privacy and confidentiality or other similar obligations. Statements to the media are not permitted to be made by RMC medical staff, employees or contractors except as provided in this policy.

POLICY

Photographs, Filming and Interviews

The Marketing and Communications department will facilitate the media's requests for photographs, filming, and interviews by prearranging for consents and approvals.

Photographs or filming in which patients are identifiable (or will be identified) will not be permitted unless the patient or the patient's substitute decision-maker has signed a written consent form. If the patient or his/her substitute decision-maker refuses, the media should be advised that photographs will not be permitted at the request of the patient or substitute decision-maker.

Photographs for publication by the media or for professional publication may be taken within RMC only if approved by Marketing and Communications. If patients are involved, informed consent must be obtained as noted above.

Photographs for medical records, spousal assault, child abuse or neglect may be taken within RMC with the consent of the patient or substitute decision-maker, as applicable.

Under no circumstances is photography of any kind permissible in treatment areas or during treatment times by medical staff, employees, contractors, visitors or media personnel without written authorization facilitated by Marketing and Communications.

A patient being interviewed has the right, under terms of federal patient privacy regulations, to withdraw

consent for press use of his or her identity and protected health information at any time before, during or after the interview.

A patient may also terminate an interview at any time. In such cases, the news media must immediately end the interview and any related recording or filming of the interview subject. If such a patient also withdraws consent at that time, news media once again may not release protected health information or in any way identify the patient.

On-Site Media Coverage

Access to RMC is based on the understanding that members of the news media will adhere to all policies and laws related to patient privacy, including obtaining patient authorization prior to disclosure of patient information. Under federal policies and laws, "protected health information" includes direct or "overheard" conversations between and among caregivers, patients and family members, as well as information contained in medical records. Therefore, while RMC provides reasonable press access to its facilities, if members of the press should overhear or see "protected health information" that is not covered by an authorization they must not use or disclose that information without obtaining a specific authorization for that information. To keep inadvertent disclosures to a minimum, restrictions in some areas may be imposed and escorts for all news media film crews and still photography are required.

The Marketing and Communications department will make appropriate arrangements for all on-site media coverage. Security and the Information desk should be notified. Media personnel should be identified as media and be accompanied by a member of the Marketing and Communications department at all times during their RMC visit.

All media interviews, photography, and filming conducted on RMC property must be approved in advance by Marketing and Communications.

Media may on occasion wish to take pictures outside of RMC. They should call Marketing and Communications in advance who will notify RMC Security. Under such circumstances, they should be advised that while it is acceptable to use RMC as a backdrop, they must not photograph nor interview staff or patients as they enter or leave the premises without obtaining prior authorization from Marketing and Communications.

The media is invited to attend the Open Session of the Board meetings for the purpose of keeping the public informed about activities at RMC.

Patient Inquiries

Information about patients is confidential and cannot be released to the media without the patient's consent or that of the patient's substitute decision maker, except as otherwise provided in this policy.

Cases of Public Record

Cases public record refer to situations which have been reported to public authorities such as the Police, Coroner or Public Health Officer. In most instances, accidents occurring in the street or other public places, or where a patient has been conveyed to the RMC by the Police or the Fire Department are matters of public record.

Requests for details about the occurrence must be referred to the proper authority (e.g. Police, Public Health).

When Information Will Be Released

Upon admission, RMC provides all patients an option regarding inclusion in the patient directory as required by Federal law. Patients are asked in the admission/registration process if they would like to opt out of the facility patient directory.

- If a patient chooses to opt out of the directory, no patient condition can be provided.
- If a patient chooses not to opt out of the directory, only a one-word condition will be provided when the condition of an individual is requested, if the correct first and last name is provided by the media agency.
- Patients must give written permission to be interviewed, photographed or for issuing written statements about his/her condition.

When a media request is a matter of public record, AND the news media already know the patient's full name, AND the patient or substitute decision maker has granted permission, the only information that can be released is the patient's condition, if determined (see conditions outlined below).

Definitions

Good – Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable. Indicators are excellent.

Fair – Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious but may be uncomfortable. Indicators are favorable.

Serious – Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill. Indicators are questionable.

Critical – Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patient may be unconscious. Indicators are unfavorable.

Still Being Assessed – Patient is being examined in Emergency Department or undergoing tests. (This designation can be used pending disposition of patient and establishing appropriate code).

Attending Physician

If the attending Physician agrees, his/her name may be provided to the media for the purpose of obtaining general information only. The name may not be used without the personal consent of the Physician.

PROCEDURE

Media are required to contact RMC Marketing and Communications for all inquiries including interviews, photography, filming and on-site media coverage. If an RMC medical staff, employee or contractor is contacted by the media, s/he must direct the media to call Marketing and Communications at 803-395-2792 or 803-395-2171, or email their request to rmccomm@regmed.com.

Upon scheduling an appointment with Marketing and Communications, reporters and photographers should check in at RMC's main lobby information desk. The main lobby information desk staff will notify Marketing and Communications who will send a staff member to accompany the media representative(s) to the destination.

Attachments

No Attachments

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Administrator	Tiffany Jones: Contract and Policy Admin	05/2021

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