

Policy on the Use of Document Automation in Referral Letters

Grand Plaza Drive Doctors

This document contains both the full policy and a quick reference checklist for staff.

Full Policy

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that the use of document automation technologies in creating referral letters supports high standards of clinical care, protects patient confidentiality, and guarantees that only relevant and accurate medical information is included.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all medical, nursing, and administrative staff at Grand Plaza Drive Doctors who generate, review, or send referral letters using automated document generation tools.

3. Principles

- Clinical Relevance: Referral letters must contain only information necessary for the receiving healthcare provider to understand the patient's current condition, relevant history, and reason for referral.
- Accuracy: All information must be factually correct, up-to-date, and consistent with the patient's medical record.
- Confidentiality: Patient privacy is paramount. Irrelevant personal details, unrelated medical history, or sensitive information not pertinent to the referral must not be included.
- Accountability: Final responsibility for the content of referral letters rests with the referring clinician. Automation supports but does not replace clinical judgment.

4. Standards for Automated Document Generation

1. Template Control

- Only approved referral templates may be used.
- Templates must be designed to prompt inclusion of relevant sections (e.g., presenting problem, relevant history, medications, allergies, examination findings, investigations, reason for referral).

2. Data Selection Rules

- Automation tools must be configured to extract only information relevant to the referral type (e.g., cardiology, orthopaedics, dermatology).
- Irrelevant past history, social history, or non-essential data (e.g., immunisation records when referring for knee pain) must not be auto-inserted.

3. Review & Editing

- The referring clinician must review the draft letter before sending.
- Any automatically included information must be checked for accuracy and relevance, with unnecessary details removed.

4. Confidentiality Safeguards

- Sensitive information (e.g., mental health notes, reproductive history, substance use)

must only be included if clinically relevant to the referral.

- Identifiable third-party information (family members, carers) must not be included without explicit consent.

5. Quality Assurance

- Periodic audits of referral letters will be conducted to ensure compliance with this policy.
- Feedback will be provided to staff to support continuous improvement.

5. Responsibilities

- Clinicians are responsible for ensuring referral letters are relevant, accurate, and appropriate.
- Practice Management is responsible for maintaining approved templates, configuring automation systems, and overseeing training.
- IT Support must ensure the secure and appropriate functioning of automation tools.

6. Training

All staff using automation technologies for referral letters must complete training on:

- Identifying relevant clinical information
- Editing and validating automated outputs
- Confidentiality and data protection requirements

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if significant changes occur in clinical practice, technology, or privacy legislation.

Quick Reference Checklist

For Automated Referral Letters – Grand Plaza Drive Doctors

Before Sending an Automated Referral Letter, Ensure:

- ✔ Only relevant medical information is included (condition, relevant history, medications, allergies, investigations, reason for referral).
- ✔ Irrelevant details (e.g., unrelated past history, immunisation records, social history) are removed.
- ✔ Sensitive information (mental health, reproductive history, substance use) is included ONLY if directly relevant to the referral.
- ✔ No identifiable third-party information (family, carers) is included without explicit consent.
- ✔ The letter has been reviewed and edited by the referring clinician for accuracy and relevance.
- ✔ Confidentiality and patient privacy standards are maintained.
- ✔ The correct approved template has been used.
- ✔ The letter reflects the most up-to-date information from the patient's medical record.

Final Step:

- 👤 The referring clinician must approve and sign off the referral letter before sending.