

Information Sharing Protocol

Frequently asked questions

Information sharing between RACS and Hospitals

As part of our work to build respect in surgery, we've adopted a new [protocol](#) to guide information sharing with hospitals to help RACS monitor and manage the training environment.

The protocol applies to information sharing in complaints management, when concerns have been raised about breaches of the RACS Code of Conduct, including discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

It sets out structured information sharing thresholds and details what information about surgeons' professional conduct will be shared between a hospital and RACS, and when it will be shared.

The protocol is consistent with RACS privacy policies and the principles of procedural fairness.

What information will be shared and when, under the protocol?

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It sets out what information about surgeons' professional conduct will be shared between a hospital and RACS, and when it will be shared.

Under the protocol, information:

- **will** be shared between a hospital and RACS, when there is a joint review of a concern by a third party, and/or when substantiated findings about a surgeon have been made after a formal complaint
- **should** be shared after a formal complaint, when there are no findings made or yet determined, and/or if there are repeated allegations made about the same surgeon but no formal complaint has been received.

More detail, including what information is shared, is in the protocol.

Why do RACS and hospitals need a protocol to support information sharing?

RACS' duty of care to trainees includes providing a safe training environment which supports patient safety and fosters a culture of respect.

The sharing of information as outlined in the protocol will help assure this, by strengthening RACS' monitoring and

management of the training environment and surgical workplace. It will help make RACS' Code of Conduct more effective as the College builds a culture a respect in surgery.

The information sharing protocol is part of RACS' updated *Guidelines for the Accreditation of Hospital Training Posts* and is part of our work to build respect and improve patient safety in surgery.

Who does it apply to?

The information sharing protocol applies to:

- all current RACS Fellows when they renew their Fellowship for 2022
- all current RACS Trainees and SIMGs when they gain RACS Fellowship
- all new Fellows from 2022
- applicants to SET for the 2023 intake
- SIMGS as they progressively commence on the pathway to Fellowship from August 2022

The information sharing provisions will not be retrospectively applied to Trainees and SIMGs already in training or on the pathway to Fellowship.

What do I need to do?

You don't need do anything.

Compliance with RACS Code of Conduct is already a condition of College membership. The information sharing protocol will help make the code more effective.

What happens to the information shared between RACS and employers?

We respect the privacy of our members and the protocol outlines all conditions in terms of storage, use and access to the information collected. RACS will use information shared under the protocol in handling conduct matters and in managing and monitoring the safety of training posts and surgical workplaces.

De-identified and collated statistical information gathered through the protocol will be used to improve workplace training and shape cultural change initiatives, as well as in the assessment and accreditation of hospital training posts.

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What about privacy and consent?

RACS takes seriously its responsibilities under privacy legislation.

The information sharing protocol complies with privacy requirements in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and operates with [RACS Privacy of Personal Information Policy](#) and [RACS Privacy \(Conduct Matters\) Policy](#).

The information sharing protocol has regard for due process and procedural fairness in complaints management.

What if I wish to withdraw consent?

You can withdraw consent to information sharing by formally notifying, in writing, the privacy officers at RACS and your employer. Your request will take effect from the date correspondence is received. You cannot retrospectively do so.

What are the implications of withdrawing consent?

Fellows who withdraw consent will be precluded from active participation in College roles, including committee membership, supervisory, training or teaching roles.

Nothing in this provision prevents the College using any information for or under any College process or activity, nor prevents the disclosure of information where reporting under any regulatory process may apply or be appropriate, including mandatory reporting.

When will the protocol be introduced?

The protocol is included in RACS' updated *Guidelines for the Accreditation of Hospital Training Posts* and will apply progressively as training posts are accredited against the new standards, from 2023.

RACS will work with hospitals and Specialty Training Boards to ensure a smooth introduction of these updated accreditation standards, including the information sharing protocol. Hospitals will be informed of this tool to support information sharing as part of that process.

Who to contact?

In order to facilitate the sharing of information outlined above, an authorised hospital representative should do so in writing, to RACS Feedback and Complaints Office and Chair of the respective surgical Specialty Training Board.

RACS Feedback and Complaints Office can also be contacted for a confidential discussion.

The authorised staff member at RACS will share information in writing with the CEO of the respective hospital and Chair of the respective surgical Specialty Training Board.

RACS Feedback and Complaints

Read more about our Feedback and Complaints [here](#).