



## Patient Consent for Use of Electronic Mail

**Patient name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Patient address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Social Security Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Patient e-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. RISK OF USING E-MAIL

**The Center for Advanced Reproductive Medicine & Fertility (CARMF)** offers patients the opportunity to communicate with our clinical staff and administrative support staff (clinical services, billing) by e-mail. Transmitting patient information by e-mail, however, has a number of risks that patients should consider before giving consent. These risks include, but are not limited to:

- E-mail can be circulated, forwarded, and stored in numerous paper and electronic files.  
E-mail can be immediately broadcast worldwide and be received by both intended and unintended recipients.
- E-mail senders can misaddress e-mail.
- E-mail can be more easily falsified than handwritten or signed documents.  
Backup copies of e-mail may exist even after the sender or the recipient has deleted his or her copy.
- Employers and on-line services have a right to archive and inspect e-mails transmitted through their systems.
- E-mail can be intercepted, altered, forwarded, or used without authorization or detection.
- E-mail can be used to introduce viruses into computer systems.
- E-mail can be used as evidence in court.

## 1. CONDITIONS FOR THE USE OF E-MAIL

CARMF will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of e-mail information sent and received. However, because of the risks outlined above, CARMF cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of e-mail communication, and will not be liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not caused by CARMF's intentional misconduct. Thus, patients must consent to the use of e-mail for patient information. Consent to the use of e-mail includes agreement with the following conditions:

- All e-mails to or from the patient concerning diagnosis or treatment will be made part of the patient's medical record. Because they are a part of the medical record, other individuals authorized to access the medical record, such as staff and billing personnel will have access to those e-mails.
- CARMF may forward e-mails internally to CARMF's staff and agents as necessary for diagnosis, treatment, reimbursement, and other handling. CARMF will not, however, forward e-mails to independent third parties without the patient's prior written consent, except as authorized or required by law.
- Although CARMF will endeavor to read and respond promptly to e-mail from the patient, CARMF cannot guarantee that any particular e-mail will be read and responded to within any particular period of time. Thus, the patient shall not use e-mail for medical emergencies or other time-sensitive matters.
- If the patient's e-mail requires or invites a response from CARMF and the patient has not received a response within a reasonable time period, it is the patient's responsibility to follow up to determine whether the intended recipient received the e-mail and when the recipient will respond.
- The patient should not use e-mail for communication regarding sensitive medical information, such as information regarding sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS/HIV, mental health, sexually transmitted diseases, issues of abuse, developmental disability, or substance abuse.
- The patient is responsible for informing CARMF of any types of information the patient does not want to be sent by e-mail, in addition to those set out in (e) above.
- The patient is responsible for protecting his/her password or other means of access to e-mail. CARMF is not liable for breaches of confidentiality caused by the patient or any third party.
- CARMF shall not engage in e-mail communication that is unlawful, such as unlawfully practicing medicine across state lines.
- It is the patient's responsibility to follow up and/or schedule an appointment if warranted.

### 3. INSTRUCTIONS

To communicate by e-mail, the patient shall:

- Limit or avoid use of his/her employer's computer.
- Inform CARMF of changes in his/her e-mail address.
- Put his/her name in the body of the e-mail.  
Include the category of the communication in the e-mail's subject line, for routing purposes (e.g., billing question).
- Review the e-mail to make sure it is clear and that all relevant information is provided before sending to CARMF.
- Inform CARMF that the patient received e-mail from CARMF.
- Take precautions to preserve the confidentiality of e-mails, such as using screen savers and safeguarding his/her computer password.
- Withdraw consent only by e-mail or written communication to CARMF.

### **PATIENT ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT**

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand this consent form. I understand the risks associated with the communication of e-mail between CARMF and me, and consent to the conditions outlined herein. In addition, I agree to the instructions outlined herein, as well as any other instructions that CARMF may impose to communicate with patients by e-mail. Any questions I have regarding this matter have been answered.

Patient signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_