

## Enquiring about the condition of a patient

The privacy and safety of our patients, their family members and carers, is paramount.

When providing information about a patient to the media we are guided by the *Health Services Act 1988* at all times. This legislation limits the amount of patient information we may release without written consent from a patient or, when appropriate, their next of kin.

Without expressed consent, we are unable to provide information about a patient's injuries; illness or prognosis; about surgical intervention or procedures; or about where a patient is located in the hospital.

When providing a patient condition, we categorise the condition using the following descriptors:

- **Discharged:** the patient has left our hospital. This could mean they have been sent home or transferred to another facility.
- **Stable** – the patient is stable and vital signs are within normal limits. They are likely to be on a regular ward (not high dependency or intensive care). We will only approach patients for interviews once they are 'stable'.
- **Serious but stable** – a patient who is still likely to be in the intensive care unit or acute ward. Their vital signs are stable and within normal limits.
- **Seriously ill** - The patient may be unstable and their vital signs not within normal limits. The patient is likely to be in the intensive care unit or acute ward.
- **Critical but stable** - vital signs are within normal limits. The patient is stable but may be unconscious. Their condition is life threatening.
- **Critical** – injury or illness is life threatening. The patient is unstable. The patient may be unconscious.
- **Confirming patient deaths** – we will confirm the death of a patient only after we have confirmed that the deceased's family or next of kin is aware.

## **What we need from you**

In order to provide you with the condition of a patient we need to be sure we are talking about the same person.

When contacted about a patient, whose name you do not know, we are guided by the information you provide. The more information you can offer that will help us to identify the patient, the more likely we can assist you quickly.

Information commonly provided by reporters:

- Accident location (if relevant)
- Time of incident or reported arrival in hospital
- Gender and approximate age

If we are able to identify the patient we will provide a generic condition for you. We are unable to confirm name, age or any other details about that person.

If a patient's next-of-kin requests that we do not release a condition, we will not do so.

## **Requesting comment from family or friends of a patient**

- Any request for access to persons on Alfred Health property for media purposes must be submitted to Public Affairs.
- We will not commonly approach a patient's relatives or friends for media participation on the day of their admission.
- Family and friends of patients need to feel safe and secure when in the hospital.

News or media representatives are not permitted to enter the hospital to find and approach family or friends of patients without prior approval from Public Affairs.

Once approval has been gained the visit will be overseen by a Public Affairs representative.

**For more information contact Alfred Health Public Affairs on 03 9076 2266.**