

SafeScript: How patient privacy and data are protected

Information for health professionals

Who has access to patient records in SafeScript?

Doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists have access to SafeScript to view records of all high-risk medicines that have been supplied to patients under their care. This enables health professionals to make safer and more informed clinical decisions, and facilitates the co-ordination of treatment and communication by giving them visibility of all clinicians involved in the patient's care.

Authorised Department of Health and Human Services staff will also access SafeScript as part of their regulatory role in ensuring the safe supply of medicines in the community.

How is patient privacy protected under law?

There are offences and strict penalties under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* for improper or unauthorised use of SafeScript.

A log is created each time a record is viewed in SafeScript and this is monitored by the Department of Health and Human Services. If inappropriate use is detected, health professionals may face penalties under Victorian law and the matter may be referred to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency for further investigation.

Health professionals must always adhere to privacy requirements set out in the *Health Records Act 2001* and *Privacy Act 1988* when handling patients' health information. The Health Privacy Principles and Australian Privacy Principles specify the circumstances where health professionals can access, collect, use or disclose health information about an individual.

A Privacy Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure the implementation of SafeScript is compliant with privacy laws.

Do I need to seek patient consent to access SafeScript?

Doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists who are involved in the care of a patient are authorised under law to access that patient's record in SafeScript, without express permission from the patient, for the purposes of ensuring the patient's safety from prescription medicine related harm.

This authorisation is made under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*.

Who owns the SafeScript system?

The SafeScript system is owned by the Victorian Government.

FRED IT Group has been contracted by the Victorian Government to develop the SafeScript system. FRED IT Group is part-owned by Telstra Health and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

While FRED IT Group will retain the intellectual property for the SafeScript system, Victoria will acquire a licence to use SafeScript in perpetuity. This arrangement is consistent with the whole-of-Victorian Government policy for managing intellectual property in procurement of all goods and services.

The Whole of Victorian Government Intellectual Property Policy Intent and Principles state when the procurement of goods or services result in intellectual property being generated, the Victorian Government secures a licence to the intellectual property, only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the procurement.

Who owns the data in SafeScript?

Data contained in SafeScript is owned by the Victorian Government. The Victorian Government is responsible for ensuring data stored in SafeScript is kept securely and patient privacy is protected.



SafeScript obtains its data from the Prescription Exchange Services, which are required by law to provide SafeScript with prescription records they collect from medical clinics and pharmacies.

There are two Prescription Exchange Services operating in Australia (eRx and MediSecure). eRx is a subsidiary of FRED IT Group.

The Prescription Exchange Services are an existing part of national digital health infrastructure used to support the electronic transfer of prescriptions. The Prescription Exchange Services must also comply with the privacy requirements for handling health information set out in the *Health Records Act 2001* and *Privacy Act 1988*.

Do organisations that own the Prescription Exchange Services have access to SafeScript?

FRED IT Group provides technical support for health professionals with enquiries about using SafeScript and may require access to SafeScript for this purpose. Access is monitored by the department.

Telstra Health, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and MediSecure do not have access to SafeScript.

SafeScript has been designed to be able to connect to additional prescription data sources to provide more complete patient records for health professionals (for example, hospital outpatient and discharge prescriptions).

SafeScript is currently obtaining data from the Prescription Exchange Services but is agile in design so could obtain data from elsewhere, should eHealth technology change.

Regardless of where the data is sourced from in SafeScript, strict privacy controls will always be in place to ensure the requirements under the *Health Records Act 2001* and *Privacy Act 1988* are always met.

How does SafeScript keep records secure?

SafeScript has been built to the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards, which provide a set of criteria for the consistent application of risk managed security practices across Victorian Government Information. The Victorian Protective Data Security Standards are consistent with Commonwealth Government security

measures, including the Australian Signals Directorate's Information Security Manual.

SafeScript has been independently security audited as well as security tested to this standard.

Data encrypted in transit and at rest

Data transmitted between medical practice systems, pharmacy systems and the SafeScript database is encrypted at all times and occurs through a secure, encrypted internet connection. Data stored in the SafeScript database is also encrypted at all times.

Multi-factor authentication

SafeScript also utilises contemporary security measures to safeguard data against unauthorised access. Health professionals will be required to use multi-factor authentication (a username/password + PIN) in order to access the system.

Penetration testing

The security of the system is routinely tested and reviewed to ensure data stored in SafeScript remains protected.

Will data be used for research purposes?

De-identified data in SafeScript may be used by the Victorian Government to inform service planning and policy decisions to improve healthcare for the Victorian community.

The harms from prescription medicines is a growing public health issue. Data in SafeScript may also be published at an aggregate population level to respond to the increasing research interest in understanding the level and trends of prescription medicine usage.

All data used for research and evaluation purposes will be in accordance with the requirements in the *Health Records Act 2001* and the appropriate Human Research and Ethics Committee standards.

Further information

For further information about how the department manages personal information, visit the [department's privacy page](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/privacy) <www.health.vic.gov.au/privacy>.

Further information is available on the [SafeScript website](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/safescript) at <www.health.vic.gov.au/safescript>.