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# The electronic patient record (EPR)

This brochure provides comprehensive information about your electronic patient record (EPR).

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## The electronic patient record (EPR)

This brochure provides comprehensive information about the electronic patient record (EPR).

### 1. What is the EPR?

#### 1.1 Introduction

The electronic patient record (EPR) is a collection of personal information with documents and data about your health which are archived as original documents at your healthcare institutions such as hospitals, medical practices, Spitex, nursing homes, etc. For example, an EPR can include a hospital discharge report, a Spitex care report, a current list of medication, x-rays, medical certificates or a vaccination record. You can add your own documents to your EPR, such as a prescription for glasses, an advance care directive, the names of relatives or blood pressure readings. The EPR aims to strengthen the quality of medical treatment, improve treatment processes and patient safety, increase the efficiency of the healthcare system and promote patients' health literacy.

In case of an emergency, the necessary information is immediately available to the health professional. You and the health professionals you authorise can access this information at any time via a secure connection. You decide who can view which documents and when. The original documents are always stored at the respective healthcare institution. Copies are stored in your EPR. The Federal Act on the Electronic Patient Record (EPRA) lays out the framework conditions for processing and storing data and documents in the EPR.

#### 1.2 What benefit does the EPR have for you?

With the EPR, you gain control over your healthcare documents and enable your authorised health professionals to quickly and easily access important information. This means you are at the centre of it all – also when exchanging information. You determine who else can view the documents. This allows you to set up and manage your EPR at any time based on your current needs. The EPR's main objectives are to improve treatment quality and increase patient safety. When healthcare professionals have easy access to treatment-related documents, they quickly get important information. Unnecessary or duplicate treatments can thus be avoided. You are more likely to receive a correct diagnosis and therapy, and the risk of wrong decisions is reduced. You can also have an exclusion list of health professionals who cannot access your EPR.

#### 1.3 Data security and privacy

Data protection and data privacy are vitally important for the EPR. The Federal Act on the Electronic Patient Record (EPRA) and its ordinances stipulate how the EPR must be organised and the level of technical security. All providers of EPRs and the respective digital access IDs are thoroughly audited, certified and regularly monitored by national authorities. To avoid misunderstandings relating to names and identities in patient management, each patient is entered in the master patient index (MPI) of the respective reference community with the assigned patient identification number.

### 2. Who manages the EPR?

#### 2.1 The reference community is the provider of the EPR

A reference community includes health professionals and their institutions for the purpose of managing EPRs. Reference community members are exclusively healthcare institutions such as hospitals, birthing centres, nursing homes, group practices, etc., within which there are specialists such as doctors, pharmacists, physiotherapists, etc. On the other hand, insurance companies, the public sector and your employer are not members of a reference community and thus cannot access your EPR. Only health professionals who are reference community

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members and to whom you have given access rights can access your personal EPR. Reference communities must manage how EPRs are set up, administered and cancelled.

## 2.2 Membership of a reference community

As a patient, you can become a member of **only** one reference community. Your reference community membership is voluntary. You are free to switch to another reference community. However, a change requires **renewed consent**. The medical information that health professionals make available is not affected when you switch to another reference community and can still be retrieved. You can informally revoke your consent at any time without giving any reasons.

Representation for a large number of EPRs is possible. A representative can also manage other EPRs at another reference community at the same time.

## 2.3 The Sanela reference community

The Sanela reference community offers the EPR in 14 cantons in German-speaking Switzerland. The Sanela reference community has commissioned Post Sanela Health Ltd to provide all services related to your EPR. Post Sanela Health Ltd is a non-profit operator owned by the public sector and the participating service provider associations, both of which hold a 50% stake.

# 3. Setting up an EPR

## 3.1 Setting up an EPR by a legal representative

Your registration with the Sanela reference community is free of charge. If you want to set up an EPR on behalf of a patient, you need a power of attorney. A further prerequisite is the written, individual consent with your signature. Please bring the following documents with you for setting up your record:

- The OASI number of the patient
- Valid ID or foreign national ID – your own and that of the patient
- The OASI card or health insurance card of the patient
- Email address – yours and optionally that of the patient
- Your mobile number
- An eID account (possible service providers: SwissSign or ELCA)
- The (certified) power of attorney of the legal representative

On completion of the setting-up process, the patient is assigned the S-PID number (patient identification number).

The consent is valid as of when the permissions become effective in the EPR system. The permissions become effective once you have confirmed the activation link in your welcome email. Your consent is revoked once the permissions have been deleted in the EPR system.

## 3.2 Obtaining your consent

The reference community (EPR provider) is responsible for obtaining your consent. The consent is valid for the EPR itself and requires no further consent for individual documents or data that is entered in the EPR. By giving your consent, you accept the general terms and conditions of the operator organisation.

## 4. How do I use the EPR?

You can access your EPR from anywhere on your smartphone, laptop or PC.

### 4.1 Storage of the data and log of access to your EPR

The data stores for the EPR platform are located in Switzerland and are subject to Swiss law. Every access and data processing step is logged. This enables you to see at any time who has accessed the data.

### 4.2 Entering treatment-relevant information in the EPR

If the consent for setting up an EPR has been given, it is generally assumed that the holder of the record agrees to having health professionals enter information in it. Every health professional who is involved in administering treatment and is a member of a reference community is obliged to store treatment-relevant information obtained during that time in the EPR. You must **explicitly inform** any health professional treating you if you **do not** wish to have certain treatment records in your EPR.

### 4.3 Confidentiality levels of your EPR documents

You can select three confidentiality levels to which you can assign your medical data:

**1. Confidentiality level normal access**

2. Unless otherwise specified, newly configured medical data will automatically be given the “normal access” confidentiality level. This allows health professionals with “normal” and with “extended” access rights to access your medical data.

**3. Confidentiality level restricted access**

4. You can also choose the “restricted access” confidentiality level. This means that only health professionals with “extended” access rights can access your medical data.

**5. Confidentiality level secret**

6. If you select the “secret” confidentiality level, health professionals will not be able to access the medical data.

Health professionals can also assign newly entered medical data to the “restricted access” confidentiality level. However, a third party **cannot** override a status you have assigned.

### 4.4 Assigning access rights for health professionals as individuals and groups

You can grant either “normal” or “extended” access rights to health professionals as individuals and groups:

- a) **“Normal access rights”**: A health professional has access to your medical data with “normal” confidentiality level
- b) **“Extended access rights”**: A health professional has access to your medical data with “normal access” and “restricted access” confidentiality level

You also have the possibility to exclude healthcare professionals completely by placing healthcare professionals on an exclusion list. Furthermore, you can grant access rights for a certain period, or revoke them at any time. For groups, a restricted period is mandatory.

Assistants assigned to a particular health professional can access the medical data of that health professional by using the same access rights as those of that person.

You can also authorise health professionals to transfer your access rights to other health professionals and groups.

In addition, all health professionals or groups who are members of a reference community can access your EPR **in medical emergencies**. **Emergency access** is not granted to individual health professionals, but is basically granted for your EPR. The emergency access settings are: normal, extended and excluded.

The “normal” emergency access allows all health professionals and groups in all reference communities to access the medical data with “**normal access**” confidentiality level in an emergency.

You can extend emergency access so that health professionals can also view medical data with “**restricted access**” confidentiality level in emergencies.

Furthermore, you can fully bar emergency access so that no one can access your data, even in an emergency.

Your exclusion list **overrides** all other permissions granted. You will be automatically notified of emergency access within 15 minutes.

#### **4.5 Copies of your data**

Health professionals to whom you grant access can also **download** and save copies of your data obtained from another healthcare institution in their own practice and clinic information systems outside the EPR.

#### **4.6 Treatment context**

Health professionals are permitted to access your EPR only in connection with the treatment they administer. Any arbitrary access by a health professional for any other reason is **unlawful** and may **be subject to criminal prosecution**.

#### **4.7 Assistants**

Health professionals can appoint assistants to process data and documents in the EPR on their behalf. These assistants always act on behalf of that health professional and have the same access rights. For example, this could be practice assistants who, on behalf of a doctor, call up or store documents in the EPR.

#### **4.8 Groups of health professionals**

Especially in larger healthcare institutions, various health professionals are normally involved in your treatment. You can also grant EPR access to this group. This specialist group is put together by the respective healthcare institution and includes those health professionals who are involved in your treatment. In addition, you will be informed about the joining of any healthcare professionals who are authorised to access your EPR or are not yet authorised to do so. The health professionals who join the group automatically receive the group access rights that you have assigned.

You can ask to be notified about any health professionals who join such groups and about any access rights that they receive.

#### **4.9 Storing and deleting document in the EPR**

The documents in your EPR are digital **copies of the original documents**. You can delete any document from your EPR. Deletion of a document is irreversible and permanent. However, the original documents are still available from the health professional or institution treating you.

### **5. How do I close my EPR?**

You alone have the right to delete your EPR at any time and without having to specify the reason. The revocation can be carried out by you at any time in the patient portal.

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**Revocation** of your EPR results in the deletion of all documents in your EPR but not of the originals in the healthcare institution's practice and clinic information systems. We therefore recommend that you download and back up all documents before deleting your EPR. You can set up a new EPR at any time after a revocation. During this process, you will be assigned a new patient identification number. Your new EPR will **not contain any** documents when it is set up.

### 5.1 Can I switch to another reference community?

Your EPR is accessible throughout Switzerland. This means you can always stay in the same reference community.

However, you can change your reference community at any time. In this case, you can set up a new EPR. The current patient identification number will be assigned to your new EPR in your new reference community. In this case, you will need to grant new access rights to health professionals and re-register any representatives. Documents that you uploaded to your EPR will be deleted. You must therefore upload these documents to your EPR again after switching to another reference community. The documents that health professionals upload will be available again in your record at the new reference community, as they are linked to your existing patient information number.

If you switch to a different reference community, we would like to point out to you that your EPR is not available without interruption due to the new structure.

### 5.2 Can I appoint a representative?

Do you want someone else to manage the EPR? You can also delegate this task to a representative. This person may be a friend, family member or healthcare professional, such as your GP. You can also specify a person you trust who you have already designated in an advance care directive.

This person then has his or her own login to your EPR and the same rights, obligations and options for managing your EPR as you. Your representative can designate additional representatives but not revoke your EPR. In the EPR, you can delegate access to a representative for using the EPR with his or her own password. A legal representative who sets up an EPR for you will have exclusive access to the record. However, the legal representative can delegate this access to the patient.

The patient can appoint a representative who can access the EPR on their behalf and also assign the confidentiality levels and access rights. There is no limit to the number of representatives. The representative in the EPR has the same rights as the patient.

Representatives must identify themselves with their own means of identification from a certified publisher. With regard to the patient's EPR, the representative can, in particular,

- view without any access restrictions all documents stored in the patient portal of the represented patient;
- define the confidentiality levels of medical information on file;
- grant or revoke the access rights of health professionals to the documents on file;
- withdraw consent to the EPR on behalf of the patient at any time without giving a reason and close the EPR.

From the age of 12 until they reach legal age, children must be informed at least once a year by the representative about an EPR that has been created for them earlier. The child then has the right to revoke their EPR and, from the age of 16, can also remove or independently change their legal representative.

### 5.3 How do I as the EPR representative have access to an EPR?

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If you have your own eID, you can access the EPR as a deputy with your own login credentials. As a representative, you can use all the described functionalities in the EPR on behalf of the person who authorised you. You may designate additional deputies for your part, but you cannot revoke the EPR. The General Terms and Conditions apply analogously to you as a deputy and are accepted by means of your first login.

#### **5.4 How can you help secure your data?**

In order to protect your data, extensive security measures have been implemented in the EPR at all levels. This data is protected using state-of-the-art technology. However, it is impossible to guarantee 100% security during digital processing of health data. There is always the risk of data being misused. With your prudent behaviour and the following measures, you can help to further reduce this risk:

Do not use your login credentials for multiple accounts and never share them with third parties. Ensure the security of your end devices (PC, smartphone, tablets, etc.) by regularly performing security updates and taking measures against malware. Be alert to unusual or suspicious requests by email or phone. Do not click on links you don't trust.

Please refer to the Code of Conduct of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC, <https://www.ncsc.admin.ch/ncsc/de/home/infos-fuer/infos-private.html>) if you have any questions. We recommend that you ask your friends and family for help as needed.