POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) Ambulatory Clinics to encourage engagement with the patient in their own healthcare by the use of technology to deliver secure communication between patients and clinical teams.

This policy applies to all TTUHSC Schools who will provide patients and authorized family members or care managers the opportunity to access selected protected health information (PHI) using a secure, confidential website referred to in this policy as the patient “portal”. The portal gives the patient 24 hour access to elements of their medical records and a means of communication with their clinical team Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with the exception of scheduled holiday times. The goal of such convenient, real-time access to PHI is to educate the patient about their existing health care conditions and treatments and engage the patient in assuming greater responsibility for, and participation in, their own health care decisions.

Patients can view their portal accounts anywhere they have Internet access. They can review parts of their medical record, request appointments, receive appointment reminders, cancel appointments, view their medication list, request prescriptions, immunizations, test results, obtain educational information, and maintain account information. Additional features and content may be added as it becomes available.

TTUHSC shall utilize a secure internet connection to maintain the privacy and security of each patient’s PHI. This secure connection shall be accessible by each patient only after unique verification information has been established in accordance with this policy. The patient shall be solely responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of their own authentication information.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all TTUHSC Ambulatory clinics operated through its Schools.

PROCEDURE:

1. **Inviting and Activating a Portal Account.** Clinic personnel should invite the patient, parent or legal guardian to sign-up for the portal when a previously uninvited patient presents to the clinic for an episode of care and for each new patient.

2. **Portal Registration.** The proper process for portal registration is online at http://putter.cc/nursing/2014/8/18/portal-registration-refresher-training-and-new-items.html. This registration process may also be accomplished by telephone. Once a caller has been identified as the patient by providing his/her full name, address and phone number, his/her identity will be confirmed by providing correct answers to three of the following:
   a. Date of birth;
   b. Last four digits of social security number;
   c. Confidential security question;
   d. Medical Record Number (located on most bills);
   e. Name of last provider seen; or
Specific reason for last visit.

The patient is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of his/her username and password, and for any and all activities that are conducted through the patient portal.

3. **Secure Messaging.** All electronic communication with patients should occur through the patient portal. Messages outside of the patient portal system are not secure. Responses to any communication received from a patient through the portal should be sent the same day but no later than (2) business days. Messages do not go directly to the providers. Clinical staff will review and address all clinical issues and forward administrative issues to the proper person. They may forward the message directly to the provider, if necessary. The provider may respond to the patient or have staff complete the communication.

   a. Patients are advised on the portal itself that the portal is not appropriate for communicating urgent medical issues or anything that requires immediate attention. Patients are instructed on the portal site that if an emergency exists, to dial 911.

   b. When new information is available in the portal, a message is automatically sent to the patient’s email address, notifying him or her to log in to view the information. There should not be any direct communication regarding clinical information to an external email address.

4. **Adolescent Patients.**

   a. Legal guardians or parents of patients age 0-12 may gain access to the portal account with proxy access for a child.

   b. When the child reaches the age of 13, the portal account will be automatically deactivated. At the age of 13, the adolescent child, with parental or legal guardian permission, may access the portal but the parent or legal guardian will not have access.

   c. Confidential adolescent access is encouraged to promote good communication between the adolescent and the provider. If the parent refuses to grant permission for access, then no one will have access from the ages of 13-17. Proxies or parents will only be granted access to an adolescent account under special circumstances including but not limited to mental incapacity or chronic severe illness.

   d. Parent information sheet, [5.19.A, MyTeamCare for Adolescents - Parent and Patient Information](#), outlines the TTUHSC policy for portal access for adolescent patients.

   e. After reading the information sheet, parents may sign the [5.19.B, Permission for Adolescent Access to MyTeamCare](#), allowing a child confidential access to his/her own portal account and to manage the password.

5. **Reason for Deactivating Portal Account.** A portal account may be deactivated for the following reasons:


   b. Patient requests a deactivation

   c. Legal or medical guardian change

   d. Patient terminates care

   e. Patient is terminated from care of TTUHSC

   f. Patient violates the portal terms, uses abusive language or use of the portal for emergencies.

   g. Patient expires.
h. If a TTUHSC employee feels that a patient is using abusive language or is repeatedly violating the terms and conditions of use, the employee should contact MyTeamCare at (877) 621-8014.

i. If the physician believes that access to the portal is not in the patient’s best interest.

**APPROVAL AUTHORITY:**
This policy shall be recommended for approval by the Joint Ambulatory Policy Committee to the Council of Deans.

**RESPONSIBILITY AND REVISIONS:**
It is the responsibility of the Joint Ambulatory Policy Committee to review and initiate necessary revisions based on collaboration and input by and through Quality Improvement/Performance Improvement, Risk Management and the Office of Institutional Compliance.

**RIGHT TO CHANGE POLICY:**
TTUHSC reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time to reflect changes in policy and/or law.

**CERTIFICATION:**
This policy was approved by the Council of Deans on March 12, 2015.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

5.19.A – MyTeamCare for Adolescents - Parent and Patient Information

5.19.B – Permission for Adolescent Access to MyTeamCare