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CONFIDENTIALITY OF YOUR PATIENT RECORDS

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Dear Patient:

Physicians have always protected the confidentiality of health information by sealing medical records away in file cabinets and refusing to reveal your information without your permission. Today, state and federal laws also attempt to ensure the confidentiality of this sensitive information.

The federal government recently issued regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act or HIPAA", which were designed to protect the privacy of your health information. This "privacy rule" protects health information that is maintained by physicians, hospitals, other health care providers and health plans. Physicians have until April 14, 2003 to comply with the privacy rule's standards for protecting the confidentiality of your health information.

This new regulation protects virtually all patients regardless of where they live or where they receive their health care. Every time you see a physician, are admitted to the hospital, fill a prescription, or send a claim to a health plan, your physician, the hospital, other health care provider or health plan will need to consider the privacy rule. All health information including paper records, oral communications, and electronic formats (such as email) are protected by the privacy rule.

The Privacy rule also provides you with certain rights, such as the right to have access to your medical records. However, there are exceptions; these rights are not absolute. We also take precautions in our office to safeguard your health information through training our employees and employing computer security measures. Please feel free to ask your physician or our privacy officer about exercising your rights or how your health information is protected in our office.

A copy of the Notice of Uses and Disclosure of Protected Health Information is available upon request. It contains very important information about how your confidential health information is handled by our office. It also describes how you can exercise your rights with regards to your confidential health information.

Please let us know if you have any questions about our Notice of Use and Disclosures of Protected Health Information. You may contact our privacy officer, Ja-Ne Abreu, at 450-2370.