

Orthopedic Knee, Shoulder and Sports Surgery

Michael M. Heckman, M.D., P.A.

Dear Patient:

Physicians have always protected the confidentiality of health information by securing medical records and refusing to reveal your information except as when necessary to provide medical care. Today, state and federal laws also attempt to ensure the confidentiality of your personal medical information.

The Federal Government recently published regulations for the protection of your health information. This "privacy rule" protects health information that is maintained by physicians, hospitals, other health care providers (i.e. physical therapy, laboratory facilities), and health plans. Effective April 13, 2003, physicians must comply with the privacy rules and regulations for protecting the confidentiality of your health information.

This new regulation protects every patient who is seen by a physician, hospital, or other health care provider, and all health information, including paper records, oral communications, and electronic formats (such as e-mails or faxes) are protected by the privacy rule.

This privacy rule also provides certain rights to the patients, such as the right to have access to your medical records. However, these rights are not absolute; there are exceptions. We take precautions in our office to ensure that your medical information is protected and is not accessible to persons outside of the office environment by training our office personnel and instituting computer security measures.

The Notice **of Privacy Practices** attached to this letter explains our privacy practices. It contains important information about how your health information is protected in our office. It also explains how you can exercise your rights with regard to your protected health information.

Please feel free to ask any questions that you have regarding these privacy rules and our practices for enforcement of these rules. You may speak with the Privacy Office during regular business hours at 558-4600, or you may discuss your questions with your physician.

Michael M. Heckman, M.D., P.A. and Staff