



INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER PATIENTS

Whilst we appreciate that patients do offer each other valuable support while inpatients of Damascus Health Services, (by sharing common experiences and problems), we have developed certain guidelines, which we strongly recommend as a result of past experience.

We acknowledge that when people are in Damascus they are often in a highly emotional and vulnerable state and relationships developed seem very meaningful at the time. However please be guided by our experience in order to keep your relationships with other patients healthy, productive and positive.

We would caution against over-involvement with fellow patients of either gender during the recovery process-both within Damascus Health Services and particularly in the period following discharge home. Our experience shows that over-involvement between patients frequently proves counterproductive and at times is not only extremely negative, but can be dangerous.

A significant number of relationships / friendships, begun in Damascus Health Services with other patients, have resulted in negative outcomes such as the following:

- Stalking (of a female patient who divulged personal information including her address)
- Suicidal threats being made to another patient over the phone

- Intrusive night time / early morning phone calls (either sober or drunk)
- Arriving unannounced from interstate / country to stay in Brisbane at patient's family home
- Harassing phone calls to patient / patient's family members
- Nagging other patients for their medication, or to go and get them medication
- Passing on confidential information to other people without permission
- Rifts being caused between patient and their partner due to intrusiveness of other patient - at times resulting in marital / relationship break-ups
- Reluctance to seek treatment because of the risk of seeing another patient

As a result of such negative outcomes, we now have more stringent guidelines regarding "over-involvement" with other patients.

It is against Damascus Health Service's Policy to ask for personal information about another patient. Specifically, it is against our Policy to ask for surnames, addresses, phone numbers and money. (Prior to admission, patients will be told to bring into Damascus Health Services, their own incidentals and money for vending machines etc).

If at any time, you are asked for this information, or to lend money, please inform the other person that you cannot do so as it is against Damascus Health Services Policy.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable with any other patient, you are invited to discuss this with the staff. It is totally appropriate to walk away from any discussion that you feel is not beneficial to your recovery.

We encourage you to seek your primary support from the Damascus staff and sources external to Damascus Health Services such as your Doctor, AA or family members.