ASSENT COMPLIANCE (PTY) LTD
Adv. F.J.P. Marais · Healthcare compliance since 2000

FRONT-DESK SELF-TEST
POPIA · PAIA · HPCSA Ethical Rules

Ten things a patient could complain about at your front desk today

Stand where the patient stands and answer honestly. **Every "yes" is a complaint waiting to happen** — to the Information Regulator, the HPCSA or the Council for Medical Schemes — and every one is something the receptionist can fix, not the lawyer.

	AT THE DESK	YES	NO
1	**Can a patient in the waiting room read the reception screen, the appointment book or the sign-in register — or is a registration form handed over on a clipboard to fill in among other patients?** Names, times and reasons for visits are personal information — health information is "special" under POPIA.	☐	☐
2	**Are results, accounts or appointment details given over the phone without first confirming who is calling?** "Is that Mrs Botha?" is not verification.	☐	☐
3	**Do staff use personal cellphones and WhatsApp to send patient details, scripts or photos — to the doctor, a lab or the patient?** The photo now lives on a private phone, backed up to a cloud the practice cannot control or audit.	☐	☐
4	**Would reception hand a patient file, or a copy, to a spouse, parent of an adult child, employer or attorney who asks for it?** Each of these needs a different answer — and the wrong one is a disclosure without consent.	☐	☐
5	**Is there no written confidentiality undertaking signed by every receptionist, administrator and locum?** POPIA holds the practice responsible for its staff; the undertaking is your first line of evidence.	☐	☐
6	**Would a receptionist click a link in an email that says "Medical aid remittance attached — please confirm your banking details"?** Most practice breaches start with a phishing email at reception, not with a hacker.	☐	☐
7	**Do you not know, without looking it up, how long patient records must be kept and how old files are destroyed?** HPCSA Booklet 9 sets the periods; destruction and the register of what was destroyed are the practice's duty.	☐	☐
8	**If a patient complained at the counter about their privacy or their account, would the receptionist not know the written steps to follow?** The CPA, the Health Professions Act, the Medical Schemes Act and POPIA each give the patient a route.	☐	☐
9	**Has the practice not registered its Information Officer with the Information Regulator, or is there no PAIA manual available at reception or on the website?** Both are legal requirements, and the first thing an inspector or a complainant's attorney asks for.	☐	☐
10	**Would a receptionist be unsure what to do if a patient became aggressive, or if a stranger walked into the back office?** Patient and worker safety is part of the professional duty; a written checklist turns panic into procedure.	☐	☐

0–2 "yes"

Better than most. The seminar shows you how to prove it — the policies, registers and undertakings that turn good habits into evidence.

3–5 "yes"

Gaps in the places complaints actually come from. Each is a procedure your receptionist can run from tomorrow, if someone shows her how.

6 or more

You are relying on luck and good staff. One difficult patient, one phishing email or one records request could cost more than the practice can absorb.

Three or more "yes" answers? Send the person behind the desk.

Seminar 3 · Professional Behaviour, Ethics and the Law in the Healthcare Practice · One day in your town, 08h30–16h00 · 6 Ethical CPD points · includes the 2026 POPIA Compliance Management Framework (R 6 950 value), the manual, templates and the safety checklist.

Reserve a seat →

This self-test is general information, not legal advice on a specific practice. References: Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013, ss 19–22, 26–27, 55–56; Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, ss 14, 51; HPCSA Ethical Rules of Conduct and Booklets 5, 9 and 10; Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008; Medical Schemes Act 131 of 1998. © 2026 Assent Compliance (Pty) Ltd · marais@assentcompliance.co.za · 061 515 5194 · assentcompliance.co.za