

CEDAR PRACTICE Chaperone Policy

Introduction

The Practice is committed to providing a safe comfortable environment where patients and staff can be confident that best practice is being followed at all times and the safety of everyone is of paramount importance.

Definition of a Formal Chaperone

In clinical medicine, a formal chaperone is a person who serves as a witness for both a patient and a medical practitioner as a safeguard for both parties during a medical examination or procedure and is a witness to continuing consent of the procedure. Family members or friend may be present but they cannot act as a formal chaperone.

Why Chaperones are Needed

There are two considerations involved in having a chaperone to assist during intimate examinations; namely for the comfort of the patient and the protection of the doctor/nurse from allegations of impropriety.

Intimate Examination

Examples of an intimate examination include examinations of the breasts, genitalia and the rectum but it also extends to any examination where it is necessary to touch or be close to the patient for example conducting eye examinations in dimmed lighting, taking the blood pressure or palpating the apex beat.

The Rights of the Patient

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, examination or procedure where they feel one is required.

Patients have the right to decline the offer of a chaperone. However the clinician may feel that it would be wise to have a chaperone present for their mutual protection for example, an intimate examination on a young adult of the opposite gender.

If the patient continues to decline the doctor will need to decide whether or not they are happy to proceed in the absence of a chaperone. This will be a decision based on both clinical need and the requirement for protection against any potential allegations of improper conduct.

Appropriately Trained Chaperone

An appropriately trained chaperone is defined as a member of staff who has completed training and who has been assessed as competent by a member of the Practice clinical team.

Consultations Involving Intimate Examinations

If an intimate examination is required, the clinician will:

- establish there is a need for an intimate examination and discuss this with the patient
- give the patient the opportunity to ask questions
- obtain and record the patient's consent
- offer a chaperone to all patients for intimate examinations (or examinations which may be construed as such) -if the patient does not want a chaperone it will be recorded in the notes

The Patient can Expect the Chaperone to be:

- available if requested
- pleasant/approachable/professional in manner and able to put them at ease
- competent and safe
- clean and presentable
- confidential

The Position of the Chaperone

The positioning of the chaperone will depend on several factors for example the nature of the examination and whether or not the chaperone has to help the clinician with the procedure.

The clinician will explain to the patient what the chaperone will be doing and where they will be in the room.

Raising Concerns About a Chaperone

Patients should raise any concerns/make any complaint via the practice's usual comments/complaints procedure.

When a chaperone is not Available

There may be occasions when a chaperone is unavailable (for example on a home visit or when no trained chaperone of the appropriate sex is in the building).

In such circumstances the doctor will assess the circumstances and decide if it is appropriate to go ahead without one.