

Chaperone Policy

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Chaperone Policy

1. Introduction

Novus Health is committed to providing a safe, comfortable environment where patients and staff can be confident that best practice is being followed at all times. It is good practice to offer all patients a chaperone for any examination or procedure where the patient feels a chaperone is required. It is also important to provide a chaperone where the clinician has requested it.

This policy is designed to protect both staff and patients from abuse or allegations of abuse during examinations and procedures, ensuring that the patient's safety, privacy and dignity are protected at all times, and safeguarding staff and patients from misinterpretation of actions.

2. Type of Chaperone

There are two types of chaperone: an informal chaperone, and a formal chaperone. All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present during their examination/procedure; this can be a family member or a friend, ie. an informal chaperone, or a formal chaperone where an informal chaperone is not felt to be appropriate.

Informal chaperone: Patients will often feel reassured by the presence of a familiar person. Where a patient requests the presence of a family member or friend, this should be accepted in most cases, although there are situations where this may not be appropriate, for example where a child is asked to act as a chaperone for a parent during an intimate examination.

Formal chaperone: Where a formal chaperone has been requested, or the clinician feels one should be present, it is recommended that the chaperone is a clinical member of staff, however, if there are no clinical staff available a competent non-clinical member of staff can act as the chaperone, providing they have been trained and feel comfortable in acting in this role. Where the patient specifically requests a male or female chaperone, this should be accommodated wherever possible. It is important that the chaperone is confident with both the patient and the clinician, and possesses good communication skills. If a chaperone is required but is not available, the appointment will re-arranged and this should be documented.

3. Guidelines

- Signs will be displayed in all waiting areas advising the use of chaperones;
- The clinician will ask if the patient requires a chaperone before the examination/procedure takes place. Patients who request a chaperone should never be examined without a chaperone being present;
- Refusal of a chaperone must always be documented in the patient's medical record;
- The clinician should give the patient a clear explanation of what the examination/procedure will involve;
- The patient must be provided with adequate privacy to undress and dress, and this must not be allowed to take place without the chaperone present;
- The clinician must always adopt a professional and considerate manner.

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4. Responsibilities of the Chaperone

- To be aware of the examination/procedure which is to be carried out;
- To introduce themselves to the patient, confirming they are there to act as chaperone and asking the patient if there is anything they want to know before the examination/procedure takes place;
- To ensure the patient's privacy and dignity are maintained;
- To know where they should stand during the examination/procedure;
- To provide comfort and reassurance to the patient, including explaining anything the patient doesn't understand;
- To provide protection for the clinician against any unfounded allegations of improper behaviour;
- To identify any unusual or unacceptable behaviour on the part of the clinician;
- To be confident to stop the proceedings if they feel this is necessary, and report anything untoward;
- To check with both the patient and the clinician that they are happy for them to leave the room, once the examination/procedure has finished;
- To document that a chaperone has been present in the patient's medical record.

5. The Examination/Procedure

Prior to examining the patient, the clinician will ask the patient if they require a chaperone. If the patient refuses a chaperone it must be documented in the patient's medical record that an offer was made and declined by the patient. Where a chaperone is required, the clinician will document that a chaperone is present, confirming their identity.

The chaperone will be aware of the examination/procedure which is taking place. Once they have entered the room they will introduce themselves. The patient should still be dressed and will then be given adequate privacy to undress (preferably behind a curtain).

During the examination/procedure, the chaperone must stand inside the curtain, at the top or bottom of the couch, depending on which position enables them to see the examination/procedure taking place. The chaperone must not leave the room until the examination has finished, the patient is fully dressed and has confirmed they are happy for them to leave.

Following the examination/procedure, the chaperone will document in the patient's medical record, separately to the clinician, that they were present during the examination/ procedure, and that there were no problems. However, if the chaperone has any concerns these must be escalated to their Line Manager immediately (please refer to the section entitled 'How to Raise Concerns' at the end of this policy).

6. Confidentiality

The chaperone should only be present for the examination/procedure itself; most discussions will take place when the chaperone is not present to avoid the chaperone intruding in a confiding clinician-patient relationship.

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Patients should be reassured that all staff understand their responsibilities and will under no circumstances divulge any confidential information.

7. Rights of the Patient

The presence of a chaperone during an examination/procedure must be the choice of the patient. A patient has the right to decline any chaperone which is offered if they wish to do so. A clinician has the right to refuse to perform the examination/procedure if it is deemed necessary to have a chaperone present.

8. How to Raise Concerns

If you have any concerns about how an examination/procedure has been conducted during your time as chaperone, you must raise this immediately with your line manager (if out of hours this must be the next day). Initially these concerns should be raised with the clinician and documented, however, if you are unhappy with their response or feel unable to raise this with them, you should refer to our Whistleblowing Policy.