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Chaperone Policy

Document Control

A. Confidentiality Notice

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Acorn Medical 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.

This Chaperone Policy adheres to local and national guidance and policy –i.e.:- ‘NCGST Guidance on the role and effective use of chaperones in Primary and Community Care settings’.

The Chaperone Policy is clearly advertised through patient information leaflets, website (when available) and can be read at the Practice upon request. A Poster is also displayed in the Practice Waiting Area (See example in Annex A).

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, examination or procedure where they consider one is required. The chaperone may be a family member or friend, but on occasions a formal chaperone may be preferred.

Patients are advised to ask for a chaperone if required, at the time of booking an appointment, if possible, so that arrangements can be made and the appointment is not delayed in any way. During a consultation whereby an intimate examination is required the Healthcare Professional must offer a chaperone and record in the patient records the outcome. The Healthcare Professional may also require a chaperone to be present for certain consultations.

All staff are aware of and have received appropriate information in relation to this Chaperone Policy.

All trained chaperones understand their role and responsibilities and are competent to perform that role.

There is no common definition of a chaperone and their role varies considerably depending on the needs of the patient, the healthcare professional and the examination being carried out.

Their role can be considered in any of the following areas:

- Emotional comfort and reassurance to patients
- Assist in examination (e.g. during IUCD insertion)
- Assist in undressing
- Act as interpreter
- Protection to the healthcare professional against allegations / attack

Checklist for consultations involving intimate examinations

- Chaperones are most often required or requested where a male examiner is carrying out an intimate examination or procedure on a female patient, but the designation of the chaperone will depend on the role expected of them, whether participating in the procedure or providing a supportive role.
- Establish there is a genuine need for an intimate examination and discuss this with the patient and whether a formal chaperone (such as a nurse) is needed.
- Explain to the patient why an examination is necessary and give the patient an opportunity to ask questions. The chaperone would normally be the same sex as the patient and the patient will have the opportunity to decline a particular person as a chaperone, if that person is considered not acceptable for any reason.
- Offer a chaperone or invite the patient to have a family member / friend present.
- If the patient does not want a chaperone, record that the offer was made and declined in the patient's notes.
- Obtain the patient's consent before the examination and be prepared to discontinue the examination at any stage at the patient's request.
- Record that permission has been obtained in the patient's notes.
- Once the chaperone has entered the room, they should be introduced by name and the patient allowed privacy to undress / dress. Use drapes / curtains where possible to maintain dignity. There should be no undue delay prior to examination once the patient has removed any clothing.
- Explain what is being done at each stage of the examination, the outcome when it is complete and what is proposed to be done next. Keep discussion relevant and avoid personal comment.
- The chaperone must stand clearly inside the curtain and, if an internal examination is being carried out, should stand half way down the bed so that they are able to see what is happening during the examination. If a breast examination is being carried out, the chaperone must ensure that they can see the procedure that is being carried out. The chaperone **MUST** be aware of what examination they are chaperoning before it begins so that they are fully aware should anything other than the relevant examination be carried out.
- If a chaperone has been present, record that fact and the identity of the chaperone in the patient's notes.
- During the examination, the chaperone may be needed to offer reassurance, remain alert to any indication of distress but should be courteous at all times.
- Record any other relevant issues or concerns in the patient's notes, immediately following the consultation.
- Chaperones should only attend the part of the consultation that is necessary – other verbal communication should be carried out when the chaperone has left.
- Any request that the examination be discontinued should be respected.
- Healthcare professionals should note that they are at an increased risk of their actions being misconstrued or misrepresented, if they conduct intimate examinations where no other person is present.
- Health professionals should not ask chaperones to stand outside of the curtain but must ensure that the chaperone can see the full examination.

Annex A

Example Chaperone Poster for use in Waiting Area

Chaperones

If you feel you would like a Chaperone present at your Consultation, please inform your Doctor / Nurse, who will be more than happy to arrange this for you.

