

THE ATRIUM HEALTH CENTRE
PATIENT POLICY

Title: Chaperones
Review Date: December 2023 **Version:** 1.4

Introduction:

This policy is designed to protect both patients and staff from abuse or allegations of abuse and to assist patients to make an informed choice about their examinations and consultations.

The role of the chaperone

The role of the chaperone will vary on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the needs of the patient and the examination or procedure being carried out. A chaperone is present as a safeguard for all parties and is an impartial witness to continuing consent of the examination or procedure.

All medical consultations, examinations and investigations are potentially distressing. Patients can find examinations, investigations or photography involving the breasts, genitalia or rectum particularly intrusive and this is important when examinations are performed by members of the opposite sex. These examinations are called 'intimate examinations'. Therefore a chaperone may be required for any consultation where a patient may feel vulnerable.

What Happens in the consultation;

The clinician should give the patient a clear explanation of what the examination will involve, why it is necessary and ask their permission to do the examination as consent is only valid if the patient has capacity and is fully informed.

Patients who request a chaperone should never be examined without a chaperone being present. If necessary, where a chaperone is not available, the consultation/examination will be rearranged for a mutually convenient time when a chaperone can be present.

- If you are not happy for the examination to go ahead without a chaperone explain the reasons to the clinician and request to re-arrange the consultation.
- The patient will always be provided with adequate privacy to undress and dress and kept covered as much as possible to maintain dignity.

Procedure for when a chaperone is felt necessary or requested;

- The clinician will contact Reception to request a chaperone.
- The clinician will code in the medical notes that the chaperone is present and identify the chaperone.
- Where no chaperone is available the examination will not take place; should a chaperone have been requested and the patient then changes their mind, the consultation will not progress and will be rearranged.
- The chaperone will enter the room discreetly and remain in room until the clinician has finished the examination.
- The chaperone will normally attend inside the curtain at the head of the examination couch and watch the procedure.
- To prevent embarrassment, the chaperone should not enter into conversation with the patient or clinician unless requested to do so or make any mention of the consultation afterwards.

Who can act as a Chaperone?

Both clinical and non-clinical staff can act as a chaperone in the practice. Where the practice determines that non-clinical staff will act as a chaperone the patient must agree to the presence of a non-clinician in the examination and be at ease with this. All practice staff have received training on being a chaperone and will have information on their person to show this (i.e. a sticker displayed on their ID lanyards).

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Please note that a family member or friend is not permitted to act as a chaperone as they are not deemed to be impartial even if they have the requisite training or clinical knowledge. However, they may be present during the procedure/examination if the patient is content with this decision.

Confidentiality;

- The chaperone should only be present for the examination itself, and most discussion during the consultation should take place while the chaperone is not present.
- Patients should be reassured that all practice staff understand their responsibility not to divulge confidential information.

Considerations

In a diverse multicultural society, it is important to acknowledge the spiritual, social and cultural factors associated with the patient population. Clinicians will respect the patient's wishes and, where appropriate, refer them to another practitioner to have the examination or procedure undertaken.