

## **Crown Medical Practice**

### **Chaperone Policy**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to protect staff and patients from abuse, or allegations of abuse, and to facilitate patients' informed choice about their consultations.

A chaperone is an impartial observer of an examination. They will usually (and wherever possible) be of the same sex as the patient. They may be a health professional or non-clinical staff, with appropriate training and familiarity with their role and the procedure of the relevant examinations.

All clinicians will consider the justification of any intimate or personal examinations; alongside the risk of misunderstanding presented by any consultation. The phrase "intimate examination" refers to genital, rectal and breast examinations. Chaperones will be routinely offered before intimate examinations. Any examination can be considered personal: there will be times when either the patient or clinician feels uncomfortable and it would, in these circumstances, be appropriate to consider using a chaperone.

Complaints and harm relating to inadequate use of a chaperone are relatively rare but the severity of consequence for patients, staff and the broader public confidence in medical care directs guidance and recommendations for the use of chaperones in medical practice, specifically for intimate examinations. Clinicians will consider the possibility of malicious accusation by a patient and organise the presence of a chaperone if there is any potential for this.

Patients can expect:

- A clear explanation of what an examination will involve.
- Adequate privacy to undress and dress
- The option of a chaperone. A suitable sign will be clearly on display in the waiting room and each consulting room. Patients can refuse the offer of a chaperone.
- Clinicians will maintain a professional and considerate manner. To remove the potential for misunderstanding: clinicians are aware that humour (often helpful in relaxing a nervous situation) can be misinterpreted and will be accordingly careful.
- Confidentiality. Chaperones will be aware their role is to "protect patient's dignity and confidentiality at all times" (MDU, 2022). Patients can be reassured that all practice staff understand their responsibility not to share confidential information.

Patients who request a chaperone will never be examined without a chaperone present though – rarely – this may require rearrangement of the consultation/examination for a mutually convenient time if a chaperone is unavailable.

#### **Procedure**

If a chaperone is required/requested, the clinician will contact reception to arrange this.

If a chaperone is unavailable, and a delay would not have an adverse outcome on the patient's health, the clinician may offer to rearrange the examination to accommodate the presence of a chaperone.

If the clinician wishes for a chaperone to be present but the patient refuses, the clinician will clearly explain their reasoning. The clinician may choose to refer the patient to a colleague who would be willing to examine the patient without a chaperone, so long as any delay would not have an adverse effect on the patient's health.

The clinician will record the presence and identity of the chaperone present; or the absence of a chaperone if the patient declines a chaperone for intimate examination.

A chaperone will enter and leave the room discreetly after having been informed by the clinician which examination they will be observing. They will be present until the examination is completed. During the examination, they will stand inside the curtain/examination screen and observe the procedure. Unless invited or requested to do so, the chaperone will not enter into conversation with the patient or the clinician.

The chaperone will not discuss the consultation after the fact, unless to raise concern via the appropriate channel. A chaperone may make a record in the patient's notes to state their presence and that there were no problems, or to give details of any concerns or incidents that occurred. The chaperone will be aware to contact the practice manager if any concerns are identified.

**References:**

MDU, 2022. *Chaperones: The who, when and what of having a chaperone present during intimate examinations*. <https://www.themdu.com/guidance-and-advice/guides/guide-to-chaperones>. Published 19/01/22. Last accessed 24/06/22