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Chaperone Policy

Brannam Medical Centre is committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment for patients and staff, where best practice is observed at all times.

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, procedure or examination if they feel they need one. The chaperone can be the patient's own choice. However, on some occasions a formal trained chaperone is required who could be a member of the practice staff.

Whenever it is possible we would ask you to make your request at the time of your booking so that the surgery can make the necessary arrangement. Sometimes it may mean the postponement of your appointment.

Your healthcare professional may also require a chaperone in accordance with our policy.

GUIDELINES

Clinicians (male and female) should consider whether an intimate or personal examination of the patient (either male or female) is justified, or whether the nature of the consultation poses a risk of misunderstanding.

- The clinician should give the patient a clear explanation of what the examination will involve. (during the explanation the chaperone should be present)
- Always adopt a professional and considerate manner - be careful with humour as a way of relaxing a nervous situation as it can easily be misinterpreted.
- Always ensure that the patient is provided with adequate privacy to undress and dress.
- Ensure that a suitable sign is clearly on display in each consulting or treatment room offering the chaperone service if required.

- 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 should be rearranged for a mutually convenient time when a chaperone can be present.

CHAPERONES

A chaperone does not have to be medically qualified but will ideally:

- be sensitive, and respectful of the patient's dignity and confidentiality
- be prepared to reassure the patient if they show signs of distress or discomfort
- be familiar with the procedures involved in a routine intimate examination
- be prepared to raise concerns about a doctor if misconduct occurs.

The staff member should be trained in the procedural aspects of personal examinations, comfortable in acting in the role of chaperone, and be confident in the scope and extent of their role. They will have received instruction on where to stand and what to watch and instructions to that effect will be laid down in writing by the practice.

A family member should not act as chaperone to a minor.

PROCEDURE

- The clinician will establish where there is a genuine need for an intimate examination.
- Discuss and explain to the patient the nature of the examination; give the patient time an opportunity to ask questions.
- Obtain the patient's permission.
- Offer a chaperone or ask patient to invite one. Record in the notes the offer or the refusal.
- The clinician will contact reception to request a chaperone (ideally same gender).
- The clinician will record in the notes that the chaperone is present, and identify the chaperone. The chaperone should be present during the explanation of the procedure and the patient's consent.

NB: Where no chaperone is available the examination will not take place – the patient should not normally be permitted to dispense with the chaperone once a desire to have one present has been expressed. If the chaperone leaves during the examination, it will cease immediately.

- The chaperone will enter the room discreetly and remain in room until the doctor/nurse has finished the examination.

- The chaperone will normally attend inside the curtain at the head of the examination couch and watch the procedure.
- Sitting down during the exam should not be permitted as this may not allow the chaperone to observe the entire examination.
- The chaperone should refrain from comments regarding the findings or appearance of findings during an examination.
- To prevent embarrassment, the chaperone should not enter into conversation with the patient or GP unless requested to do so, or make any mention of the consultation afterwards.
- The chaperone may talk calmly with the patient assure comfort.
- The patient can refuse a chaperone, and if so this must be recorded in the patient's medical record.
- Patients should be reassured that all practice staff understand their responsibility not to divulge confidential information.

HOME VISITS

There may be rare occasions when a chaperone is needed for a home visit. The above procedure should still be followed.

Click here to link to the latest GMC guidelines for intimate examinations:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/21170.asp