

Chaperone Policy

February | 2018

Responsible Committee: Clinical Governance Committee

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Comments (details of changes)

You must treat patients as individuals and respect their dignity and privacy¹.

1. INTRODUCTION

South East London Doctors Co-operative (SELDOC) provides out-of-hours and unscheduled primary care services to patients registered with a GP practice in Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Sutton and South West London CCGs and unregistered patients residing within its boundaries. The service SELDOC provides is for urgent medical conditions, not for routine or planned care such as minor surgery or procedures.

This policy sets out guidance for healthcare professionals on the use of chaperones for intimate examinations.

2. DEFINITIONS

a. Intimate Examination

Intimate examinations are defined as any examination or procedure involving the breasts, genitalia and rectum. Other examinations could also be deemed intimate by some patients and healthcare professionals need to be aware of cultural differences and what may constitute an intimate examination.

b. Chaperone

A chaperone, in the context of this policy, is an impartial observer to a patient and healthcare professional during an intimate examination.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

The objectives of this policy are:

- To protect the patients' safety, privacy and dignity during intimate examinations
- To minimise the risk of healthcare professionals' actions being misinterpreted
- To assist healthcare professionals to determine when and how chaperones should be used.

4. SCOPE

This policy is intended for all SELDOC staff and healthcare professionals working at SELDOC, including staff not employed directly by SELDOC e.g. agency staff. It is particularly relevant for all staff that have any kind of patient contact.

¹ Intimate examinations and chaperones, General Medical Council, 25th March 2013
http://www.gmc-uk.org/Intimate_examinations_and_chaperones.pdf_51449880.pdf

5. LINKED POLICIES

The following policies are linked to the SELDOC Chaperone Policy and should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Consent policy
- Equality and Human Rights policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Records Management policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Service User Consultation policy
- Incident Reporting Policies & Procedures
- Performance Policy for Doctors

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all non-clinical staff and healthcare professionals working at SELDOC to have read this policy and be in a position to act in accordance with its contents.

7. KEY PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER

- a. Intimate examinations should only be performed when clinically indicated. Explain to the patient why the examination is necessary and give the patient an opportunity to ask questions
- b. Explain what the examination will involve, in a way the patient can understand, so that the patient has a clear idea of what to expect, including any pain or discomfort
- c. You should offer the patient the option of having a chaperone present wherever possible. This applies whether or not you are the same gender as the patient.
- d. Obtain the patient's permission before the examination and record
 - That the patient has agreed to or declined the examination
 - That the patient has agreed to or declined the presence of a chaperone
- e. If dealing with a child or young person you must assess their capacity to consent to the examination

- f. If a child or young person lacks capacity to consent, you should seek their parent's consent
- g. If an adult lacks capacity to consent, you should consult their named friend or family member, carer or person with lasting power of attorney before conducting any intimate examination and only perform the examination if it is in the patients' best interest to do so.
- h. Give the patient privacy to undress and dress, and keep them covered as much as possible to maintain their dignity. Do not help the patient to remove clothing unless they have asked you to, or you have checked with them that they want you to help.
- i. During the examination you should explain what you are going to do before you do it and, if this differs from what you have told the patient before, explain why and seek the patient's permission stop the examination if the patient asks you to keep discussion relevant and don't make unnecessary personal comments.
- j. Record the name or initials of the chaperone in the medical record.

8. THE ROLE OF A CHAPERONE

Chaperones at SELDOC will have received training in understanding the role and responsibilities of being a chaperone.

These include:

- a. Being sensitive to and respecting the patient's dignity and confidentiality
- b. Reassuring the patient if they show signs of distress or discomfort
- c. Being familiar with the procedures involved in a routine intimate examination
- d. Being present for the whole examination and, as much as possible, be able to see what the doctor is doing
- e. Be prepared to raise concerns if they are concerned about the doctor's behaviour or actions.

9. REPORTING CONCERNS

Any concerns should be reported to the Duty supervisor who should initiate the Incident reporting protocol and notify the Clinical Director on-call.