



## **GREATER GLASGOW PRIMARY CARE NHS TRUST**

### **POLICY ON INTIMATE PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This Policy covers examination of breasts, genitalia or rectum and is to be followed by all staff involved in such an examination.

#### **BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY**

This Policy is based on the following:-

- a) Guidance from the General Medical Council issued in December 2001
- b) The implications of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- c) Advice, during consultation, from several practitioners in Primary and Mental Health care in Greater Glasgow

#### **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY ALL STAFF CONDUCTING INTIMATE PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS**

1. Explain to the patient why an examination is necessary and give the patient an opportunity to ask questions.

---
2. 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 potential pain or discomfort (paragraph 13 of the booklet *Seeking patients' consent* gives further guidance on presenting information to patients).

---
3. Information leaflets will be made available in all clinical areas. A text of the leaflet is enclosed as an appendix. These leaflets do not replace the need for verbal information.

---
4. Where it is known in advance that a consultation will be likely to involve an intimate physical examination, it is recommended that leaflets are sent out with appointments and/or given to the patient at a "walk in" clinic.

---
5. Obtain the patient's explicit verbal consent before the examination and be prepared to discontinue the examination if the patient asks you to. You should record that consent has been given.

6. If a patient appears to need an intimate physical examination but is considered to be incapable of consenting to this, it should be conducted under the terms of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. Part 5 of the Act and the relevant Code of Practice should be observed.

---

  7. Give the patient privacy to undress and dress and use drapes to maintain the patient's dignity. Do not assist the patient in removing clothing unless you have clarified with them that your assistance is required.

---

  8. Keep discussion relevant and avoid unnecessary personal comments.

---

  9. Offer a chaperone or invite the patient (in advance if possible) to have a relative or friend present. If the patient does not want a chaperone, you should record that the offer was made and declined. Many healthcare professionals will wish to have a chaperone present, even if the patient declines, to protect the professional against any possible allegations. If a chaperone is present, you should record that fact and make a note of the chaperone's identity. If for justifiable practical reasons you cannot offer a chaperone, you should explain that to the patient and, if possible, offer to delay the examination to a later date. You should record the discussion and its outcome. A chaperone should be offered regardless of the gender of the examiner and patient and should, where possible, be the same gender as the patient.
  
  10. If the patient is incapable of consenting to the procedure, a chaperone must be provided in all cases.
  
  11. Facilities for performing intimate physical examinations must be comfortable and private. Properly equipped examination rooms and single bed rooms are appropriate, shared bed rooms may not be if other patients may overhear.

---

  12. You must obtain consent prior to anaesthetisation, usually in writing, for the intimate examination of anaesthetised patients. If you are supervising students you should ensure that valid consent has been obtained before they carry out any intimate examination under anaesthesia.
- 

## **SUGGESTED TEXT FOR LEAFLET**

### **INTIMATE EXAMINATIONS**

During your care, a doctor will need to examine you in order to provide you with the best care. Occasionally, this may involve an examination of intimate areas. We understand that this can be stressful and embarrassing. If this sort of examination is necessary:-

- We will explain to you why the examination is necessary and give you an opportunity to ask questions.
- We will explain what the examination will involve, including whether you can expect it to be painful or uncomfortable.
- We will obtain your permission before carrying out such an examination.
- You will be offered a chaperone. You may have a relative or friend with you during the examination or we can arrange for another member of staff to be present.
- At all times, we will respect your privacy during the examination and while undressing and dressing.

Your doctor and nursing staff will be happy to discuss any concerns you have about this.