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Chaperone Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the protocol for the use of chaperones during patient examinations and procedures to ensure patient comfort, privacy, and safety, and to protect the rights of both patients and healthcare providers.

Scope:

This policy applies to all physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, medical staff, and patients in the office.

Policy Statement:

In accordance with best practices and ethical guidelines, a chaperone will be provided during a patient's physical exam, specifically the part of the exam that involves intimate areas (i.e. genital or breast exam). The presence of a chaperone can provide an additional layer of comfort and assurance to both the patient and the healthcare provider.

Definitions:

- **Chaperone:** A staff member or a trained individual present during patient examinations or procedures to ensure privacy, provide comfort, and prevent misunderstandings. A chaperone may be a medical assistant, nurse, or another staff member depending on the circumstances and the patient's preference.
- **Intimate Exam:** Any examination that involves the patient's private areas (i.e. genital or breast examination).

Procedure:

1. **Offer of a Chaperone:**
 - Patients will be informed that a chaperone will be present during any physical examination or procedure that involves intimate areas.
 - The patient will be notified verbally of the chaperone's presence, prior to the start of the examination. It will be clearly explained that the chaperone is available to ensure comfort and privacy.
 - The presence of the chaperone will be documented in the patient chart.
2. **Patient Preferences:**
 - The patient or patient's parent/guardian may decline the presence of the chaperone.
 - If a specific gender is requested for the chaperone, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate this request, provided that appropriate staff is available.



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- If the patient or patient's parent/guardian declines the chaperone, the healthcare provider will respect their wishes and continue with the examination. However, the patient will be informed of the option to request a chaperone at any point during the procedure.
- 3. Role of the Chaperone:**
 - The chaperone's role is to observe the exam/procedure and ensure the patient's comfort and safety.
 - The chaperone will maintain confidentiality regarding the examination and any information shared during the encounter. All chaperones are trained to respect privacy and confidentiality.
- 4. Examination Without a Chaperone:**
 - If a patient/patient's parent/guardian declines a chaperone, the healthcare provider may proceed with the examination but must document the decision in the medical record.
 - The physician or healthcare provider may also decline to perform the examination or procedure if they feel uncomfortable proceeding without a chaperone, and this will be discussed with the patient.
- 5. Emergency Situations:**
 - In emergency situations where a chaperone cannot be present, the healthcare provider will act in the best interest of the patient, while still maintaining respect for the patient's dignity and privacy.

Documentation:

- The presence of a chaperone will be documented in the patient's medical record, including whether the patient accepted or declined the offer of a chaperone.
- The name of the chaperone present during the examination will be recorded.

Non-Compliance:

- Failure to offer a chaperone or to respect a patient's preferences regarding a chaperone may lead to an internal review of the situation and appropriate action in line with the practice's standards.

Review and Updates:

- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to comply with current regulations, best practices, and patient feedback.