

# DIGNITY, RESPECT, AND PRIVACY FOR PATIENTS POLICY

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## 1: INTRODUCTION:

The Wandsworth Medical Centre is committed to providing high quality care to patients at all times.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for staff with guidance on the promotion of aspects of care which affect the dignity, respect and privacy of our patients. The Wandsworth Medical Centre also recognises the fundamental importance of maintaining the dignity, respect and privacy of all our patients wherever care is provided for them either in the practice or via home visits.

This Policy sets out how the Wandsworth Medical Centre will maintain the dignity, respect and privacy of our patients, and provides a framework on which patients, staff and the public can determine our performance.

## PRIVACY

*refers to freedom from intrusion and relates to all information and practice that is personal or sensitive in nature to an individual.*

## DIGNITY

*is being worthy of respect*

## WHAT IS DIGNITY?

Dignity consists of many overlapping aspects, involving respect, privacy, autonomy and self-worth. The provisional meaning of dignity is based on a standard dictionary definition:

*a state, quality or manner worthy of esteem or respect; and (by extension) self-respect. Dignity in care, therefore, means the kind of care, in any setting, which supports and promotes, and does not undermine, a person's self-respect regardless of any difference.*

## ASPECTS AND MEANINGS OF DIGNITY:

**Respect** - shown to you as a human being and as an individual, by others, and demonstrated by courtesy, good communication and taking time.

**Privacy** - in terms of personal space; modesty and providing privacy in personal care and the confidentiality of treatment and personal information.

**Self-esteem, self-worth, identity and a sense of self** - promoted by all the elements of dignity, but also by 'all the little things' - a clean and respectable appearance, pleasant environments - offering choice, and being listened to.

**Autonomy** - including freedom to act and freedom to decide, based on clear, comprehensive information and opportunities to participate.

While 'dignity' may be difficult to define, what is clear is that people know when they have not been treated with dignity and respect. ([Social Care Institute for Excellence](#))

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Examples of how dignity and respect may be compromised are as follows:

- Being addressed in an inappropriate manner by practice staff
- Being spoken about as if they were not there
- Not being given proper information
- Not seeking their consent and / or not considering their wishes
- Being exposed in an embarrassing manner
- Having to use premises that are unclean and smelly (toilets/consulting room facilities)
- Being subject to abuse and violent behaviour

The Wandsworth Medical Centre are committed to ensuring that these types of compromise do not happen, all patients will be treated as equal.

THE WANDSWORTH MEDICAL CENTRE AIMS TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING FOR PATIENTS:

- Patients feel that they matter all of the time
- Patients experience care/treatment/consultations in an environment that actively encompasses individual values, beliefs, and personal relationships
- Patients personal space is actively promoted by all staff
- Communication between staff and patients takes place in a manner that respects their individuality
- Patient information is shared to enable care, only with their consent
- Patients care actively promotes their privacy and dignity, and protects their modesty
- Consulting rooms provides privacy for patients at all times.

2: POLICIES PRINCIPLES:

The Wandsworth Medical Centre will ensure that all employees, medical students, volunteers and any other persons working within the Practice recognise and respect the principles of this policy.

Where any employee, medical student or volunteer comprises the dignity, respect or privacy of a patient, this will be considered as a serious issue and the disciplinary process will be followed, recognising that the Wandsworth Medical Centre take the dignity, respect and privacy of our patients very seriously.

3: KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

**All staff members** have a duty to ensure that the privacy and dignity of all patients are respected at all times.

**The Practice Manager & Partners** has overall responsibility to ensure that the privacy and dignity of all service users are respected.

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**The Clinical Lead** is responsible for ensuring that this policy followed by all clinical staff and that any other associated clinical policies such as the chaperone policy are followed at all times.

**The Practice Manager** is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented, read and signed by all employees, medical students and voluntary workers and that regular privacy and dignity audits are completed.

## 4: POLICY DETAIL /ADHERENCE TO THE POLICY:

All members of staff will ensure that the following are adhered to for all patients and visitors of the Wandsworth Medical Centre

Patients have the right to:

- Be treated as individuals
- Be welcomed, greeted and offered assistance on arrival
- Be listened to and have their views taken into account
- Be treated courteously at all times
- To know the name of the member of staff who is consulting/treating them
- Have access to appropriately segregated toilet and washing facilities
- Have access or be offered any information that they may require

## 5: CONFIDENTIALTY

Patients have the right to expect that:

- All staff are bound by a legal duty of confidence to protect personal information that they may come into contact with.
- All staff are obliged to keep any personal identifiable information safe and strictly confidential.
- Patient information is shared to enable care, with their consent

(Please refer to Practice 'confidentiality' policy)

## 6: PRIVACY, DIGNITY AND MODESTY

Patients have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity at all times

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- To have their modesty protected (refer to chaperone policy)
- To remain autonomous and independent wherever possible
- To be cared for in an environment with high standards of cleanliness to reassure service users

## 7: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Patients have the right to:

- Have their spiritual and cultural needs recognised and respected
- Have their gender, race, sexuality, disability, illness or age recognised and respected
- Help to access to our services or direction to the most appropriate services

## 8: IMPLEMENTATION /TRAINING & AWARENESS:

Many of the aspects mentioned within this policy are part of everyday high quality care that we aspire to provide for our patients. To support the implementation of this policy, all staff will be expected to undertake Customer Care training and follow the Practice Customer Service protocols.

This Privacy, Dignity and Respect Policy includes Equality & Diversity training as a mandatory requirement, the following non mandatory training is also recommended:-

- Customer Care Training
- Confidentiality

The Practice Manager will ensure this policy will be implemented, shared and followed by all Practice staff.

## 9: LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES & DOCUMENTS:

This policy links to:

- The Complaints Policy
- The Chaperone Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Confidentiality
- Consent to Examination or Treatment
- Codes of Conduct

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## 10: ANNUAL AUDIT:

An annual audit will be carried out to ensure the following:

The Wandsworth Medical Centre have systems in place to ensure that staff treat their patients, their relatives and carers with dignity and respect.

The Wandsworth Medical Centre make information available to patients and the public on their services, provide patients with suitable and accessible information on the care and treatment they received and, where appropriate inform patients on what to expect during treatment, consultations and any follow up/after care.

The Practice environment promotes effective care and optimises health outcomes by being supportive of patient privacy and confidentiality.

That the Practice complies with infection control legislation and provides a welcoming, clean, hygienic environment for our patients and visitors.

That all staff are aware of, have read and signed and follow the policy to provide a high standard of dignity and respect to our patients at all time.

## 11: PERSONAL CONSIDERATION AND RESPECT:

Examples of good practice to achieve personal consideration and respect include:

- Staff introducing themselves on initial contact with patients, including phone conversations, and stating their name and role.
- Staff wearing identification badges at all times.
- Staff asking each patient how they wished to be addressed e.g. Mrs/Ms and avoid lapsing into over familiarity, using colloquial titles such as "dear" or "petal" "mate" unless this is acceptable to, and agreed by the patient first.
- Dealing with a patients request for assistance promptly.
- Avoiding personal conversations with co-workers that exclude the patient e.g. talking to a colleague about the rest of the day's workload while consulting with/treating a patient.
- Knocking before entering a room or attaching a notice to curtains saying "do not enter" when the patient is being examined and waiting for a reply before opening curtains. Curtain clips should be used to secure curtains.
- Being aware of how body language may be interpreted by a patient / carer; standing at the foot of a patient's bed, with folded arms and avoidance of eye contact, may lead a patient to feel that the interaction was impersonal and / or intimidating.

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- Ensuring that a patient who does not speak or understand English has access to interpretation services in a timely manner.
- Ensure patients have access to segregated toilet facilities.
- Practitioners in a patient's home will act as a guest, ensuring entering the property and using the facilities are with the patient's permission.
- Patients and relatives should be communicated with and no assumptions should be made about pace, level or format. Staff should always be ready to alter speed, check and repeat or explain information in a different way to ensure understanding.

## 12: CONFIDENTIALITY – EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Examples of good practice to achieve confidentiality include:

- Patients' information should only be shared according to the Practice Confidentiality and Information Sharing policies.
- Being aware of and alert to anyone who may overhear staff conversations, e.g. it is not acceptable to discuss clinical or patient information in public areas of the practice even if a patient's name is not used.
- Ensuring written patient information which contains confidential details are disposed of correctly as per Practice protocol and are not left in public areas.
- Precautions are taken to prevent information being shared inappropriately, e.g. computer screens being viewed and white boards/notice boards being read.
- Staff should avoid displaying patient's personal information on notice boards/wipe boards.
- Young people (under 18) have the right to receive confidential health care as soon as they reach an age where they can fully understand the issues and implications of their actions. All healthcare professionals should refer to the Fraser Guidelines (Gillick Competence) when a young person attends for healthcare (Gillick vs West Norfolk, 1985)

## 13: PRIVACY, DIGNITY & MODESTY – EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Examples of good practice to achieve Privacy, Dignity and Modesty include:

- Closing curtains fully and positioning screens correctly in all areas where patients are required to undress.
- Not asking a patient to take off more clothing than is necessary.
- Following physical examination, patients should have an opportunity to re-dress before the consultation continues.

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- Checking with a patient that they give their permission to be examined by a person of the opposite sex, and respect their wishes where this is possible.
- Offering a chaperone to patients as appropriate and giving them a choice as to who is present during examinations and treatment (See Chaperone Policy)
- Patients not having to wait in a consulting room for prolonged periods of time alone, either before or during a consultation.
- Patients incapable of helping themselves must never be left without a covering to maintain their modesty and dignity.
- Carers and relatives will be involved in decisions regarding care, with the consent of the patient.

## 14: EQUALITY & DIVERSITY – EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:

- Barriers to services are identified and removed and that no person is treated less favourably on the grounds of their race, ethnic group, religion or belief, impairment, age, gender, sexual orientation, or mental health status.
- Where barriers cannot be removed, adjustments will be made.
- Staff will work with patients and families in ways that, wherever possible, take into account that they may have different attitudes, values and beliefs about health and healthcare. Where it is not possible to take this into account clear information and explanations will be given.

## 15: PRACTICE RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Wandsworth Medical Centre will ensure that the following 10 criteria are achieved following the implementation of this policy:

1. Have a zero tolerance of all forms of abuse
2. Support people with the same respect you would want for yourself or a member of your family
3. Treat each person as an individual by offering a personalised service
4. Enable people to maintain the maximum possible level of independence, choice and control
5. Listen and support people to express their needs and wants
6. Respect people's right to privacy
7. Ensure people feel able to complain without fear of retribution



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8. Engage with family members and carers as care partners
9. Assist people to maintain confidence and a positive self-esteem
10. Act to alleviate people's loneliness and isolation