OPERATING THEATRES

VISITORS AND EXTERNAL CONTRACTORS

Policy Statement

To protect the patient’s right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality, the number of visitors in the environment will be kept to a minimum.

This decision will be made by the nurse in charge / Theatre Matron.

The right for support people to be present must be balanced by the need to deliver health care.

Scope of Policy

Relatives (in particular parents / partners)
Students from various health professions
Visiting professionals (visiting surgeons)
Allied health professionals – lab techs
Maintenance engineers
Medical device representatives
Police / prison officers
Work experience students 17 years of age & over.

Definitions

Visitors – any person entering theatre not employed by the Trust.

Indications

Relatives / Carers:

- Parents may accompany a child with a nurse from the ward into the anaesthetic room until induction of anaesthesia.
- Women undergoing caesarean section may be accompanied by one relative or partner if they desire.
- Patients with language problems may be accompanied by a relative or friend to interpret.
Confused patients may be accompanied by someone they know.

**Prison officers, police officers, and psychiatric nurses:**
- Psychiatric patients accompanied by a registered nurse.
- Prison officers to accompany patients in prison or on remand.
- Police to accompany patients deemed at risk to staff or themselves by other criminals.

**Medical devices representatives:**
- May enter theatre only for observation of products and introduction of the new use of said products.

**Contra-indications**

The nurse in charge of the theatre always has the right to refuse entry to any visitor or contractor if they deem entry is contraindicated to patient health and safety ie.

- Life saving surgery
- Major infection risk
- Staffing levels too low to care for visitors
- In the event of surgery becoming an emergency the senior nurse has the right to ask visitors to leave

**Procedure**

**Patient:**
- The patient must be informed of why visitor/s will be in attendance and therefore give permission.
- Refusal should be respected and any objections recorded in the patient’s notes.

**Relatives/ friends and staff accompanying patients:**
- It is recommended that patients with special needs or requirements be accompanied by a support person.
- Children undergoing surgery may be accompanied by parent/carer to the anaesthetic room until induction. They then can be a useful asset in the recovery room once the child is awake.
- Women undergoing caesarean section may have a relative or partner accompany them to theatre.
- It is recommended that a designated waiting area is provided for relatives and friends that is situated away from the peri-operative environment

**Medical devices representatives:**
• Companies have a duty of care to provide the Theatre manager with appropriate risk assessment for the purpose and practicalities of the visit including any devices or equipment to be brought in.
• Representatives may only act as a resource of products and may not scrub or actively participate in patient care.
• Demonstrations of new products must take place prior to use in operating room
• Surgeons must notify theatre manager/staff of time, date and procedure when representatives have requested to attend.

**Work experience students:**
• Within Health and Safety law, the above students are deemed employees of the hospital organisation.
• The employer has responsibility to assess and minimise all risks to young people before they start work. This includes psychological or physical immaturity, inexperience and lack of awareness of existing or potential risks, duration of potential exposure to physical chemical and biological agents, including radiological or potentially harmful disinfect ion solution.
• Members of staff are informed of the status and that they are not permitted direct involvement inpatient care.

**Risks and precautions**

**Risks**
• Transmission of disease if visitors are unaware of asepsis and infection control practices.
• Clinical distraction during critical situations where all attention is required on the operative procedure.
• Accidental injury caused by the visitor.

**Precautions**
• To ensure the safety of the patient, visitors and peri operative staff, a theatre staff member is assigned to any visitor to the peri operative environment. This staff member is responsible for orientating the visitor to the operative environment and supervision during the visit to ensure patients’ rights to privacy are maintained and that aseptic technique and infection control practices are followed.
• The number of visitors to each theatre is limited to maintain low infection risk.
• All visitors should gain permission prior to visit. On arrival they report to Reception and the Nurse in Charge and then be referred to the person in charge of the appropriate theatre.
• All visitors entering the operating theatre are provided with necessary theatre attire and shown how to wear it.
• All visitors wear appropriate ID and are introduced to all staff in the area.
• All visitors are made aware of peri-operative etiquette, and chaperoned by a member of staff.
• Visitors are made aware of what to do if they feel faint or unwell.
• Medical, nursing and technical personnel who are not designated employees of the Trust, but wish to participate during their visit, must have their professional qualifications and health status endorsed by the theatre manager or a designated deputy prior to their visit.

References

NATN Standards and Recommendations for Safe Peri-Operative Practice (revised 2004)

Theatre Attire SC2

Health and Safety (young persons) Regulations

(Health and Safety Executive 1997) and regulation 3 of Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Health and Safety Executive 1992)