



Intimacy & Sexuality For Patients/Residents Procedure

Procedure Number
WCDHB-PG-0027

Version Nos:
4

1. Purpose

This Procedure outlines the general principles in acknowledging, respecting, understanding and supporting the intimacy and sexuality needs of the consumers (patients/residents) of West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB) services.

2. Application

This Procedure is to be followed by all clinical staff members throughout WCDHB.

3. Definitions

There are no definitions associated with this Procedure.

4. Responsibilities

For the purposes of this Procedure:

Department/Unit/Service Managers are required to:

- monitor the performance of staff members in relation to this Procedure;

Clinical Staff Members are required to:

- ensure they abide by the requirements of this Procedure;

5. Resources Required

This Procedure requires no specific resources.

6. Process

1.00 Introduction

1.01 All consumers have a right to emotional and physical safety. This is particularly important when they are dependent upon others for their personal cares.

1.01 WCDHB acknowledges the needs of consumers to express their sexuality and experience intimacy in their every day existence. It is therefore important for staff members to understand these boundaries.

1.02 Expression of sexuality is a natural human behaviour.

1.03 Need for human comfort is an essential need, especially where someone is experiencing distress. Touch is an important way of acknowledging a person and demonstrating that their needs are recognised. Holding a hand or a hand on a shoulder during moments of distress, with the consent of the person, are examples of touch that can be therapeutic without transgression of personal boundaries.

1.04 Sexuality does not necessarily mean sexual activity. Rather it includes individual expression of sexuality through appearance, dress, mannerisms and sexual orientation. The attitudes of staff members are important to ensure sexuality does not become a matter of contention, embarrassment or denigration for an consumer.



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2.00 Intimate Cares

2.01 Intimate personal care provided in health care settings include:

- assistance with showering, bathing, washing, bed baths
- dressing/undressing (under clothing, outer clothing)
- use of the toilet
- use of incontinence products
- use of continence aids e.g. uridome
- menstruation management (changing sanitary napkins, disposal of sanitary napkins)
- applying medicated creams to genital areas
- applying medicated creams to private parts of body e.g. breasts, buttocks, upper thighs
- use of suppositories or pessaries
- positioning an individual in bed
- other areas determined by the individual consumer.

2.02 Staff members will:

- i) consult with each consumer and their family/whanau/caregiver (if appropriate) about intimate care needs including who, what, where and when this should take place at assessment, and review during each admission;
- ii) whenever practicable, subject to availability of beds and nursing/therapy needs, respect consumer's wishes regarding the use of a single room or shared room, and the gender mix in a shared room;
- iii) respect and accept consumer and their family/whanau/caregiver (if appropriate) preference for who should carry out personal cares e.g. consumer states that they do not want a male member of staff to carry out personal cares;
- iv) document what is required in relation to intimate care, clearly stating what parts of the body require contact and for what purpose;
- v) this should include prompts required (e.g. visual) to allow a consumer to understand what parts of their body will be touched by staff members;
- vi) ensure that the consumer understands what is happening and why;
- vii) ensure that care is not rushed;
- viii) never make negative comments or remarks to, or about consumers during intimate care or at any other time;
- ix) maintain a professional approach at all times to supporting consumers with their intimate care;
- x) be fully aware of both consumer safety issues and their own professional safety at all times.

2.03 Staff members are required to:

- i) ensure that a consent process is in place for children and young people who are receiving support with their intimate care;
- ii) ensure that other means of communication are in place if a consumer is unable to consent verbally;
- iii) ensure that all consent is documented and update through regular reviews of care plans.



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4

2.04 It is a requirement that at no time should a female consumer receive intimate nursing cares from male nurses.

3.00 Therapeutic Touch

3.01 WCDHB acknowledges that there will be times when consumers are anxious and or distressed and may require therapeutic or comforting touch.

3.02 Staff members are to ensure that families/whanau are consulted regarding the most appropriate way to provide such support for young children. This information is to be documented in the child's clinical record.

3.03 Staff will ensure that where practicable, families/whanau are able to provide such comfort to their young child.

4.00 Friendships

4.01 There may be occasions when consumers who regularly use a WCDHB Inpatient/Residential Service, or when consumers are residing for a period of time in a WCDHB Inpatient/Residential Facility, develop friendships with each other.

4.02 Staff members are required to support the development of friendships between consumers.

4.03 Staff members will intervene if consumers become involved in situations that are potentially harmful, abusive or exploitative.

4.04 Subject to the age of the consumers, their competency to understand the implications of a relationship and subject to the laws of the land, staff will support consumers wishing to develop closer, more intimate friendships, on an individual case-by-case basis.

5.00 Sexual Expression and Behaviours

5.01 Staff will ensure that consumers are able to express their sexuality without prejudice or discrimination.

5.02 Expression of sexuality can include appearance, dress, mannerisms, and sexual orientation.

5.03 Where necessary, staff members will ensure consumers are given guidance on the appropriateness of sexual behaviours as to time, place, or type of behaviour (for example public behaviour, private behaviour). This guidance is to be given in a tactful and helpful manner.

5.04 Any issues pertaining to abuse or potential abuse are to be reported as per the requirements of the WCDHB Management of Child Abuse Procedure and the WCDHB Management Of Patient/Client/Resident Abuse & Neglect Procedure.



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4

7. Precautions And Considerations

- WCDHB acknowledges the needs of consumers to express their sexuality and experience intimacy in their every day existence. It is therefore important for staff members to understand these boundaries.
- At no time should a female consumer receive intimate nursing cares from 2 male nurses.
- Staff will ensure that consumers are able to express their sexuality without prejudice or discrimination.
- Any issues pertaining to abuse or potential abuse are to be reported

8. References

Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (1996)
Human Rights Act and Amendments (1993)
Health and Disability Sector Standards NZS 8134:2001

9. Related Documents

WCDHB Informed Consent Procedure
WCDHB Management of Child Abuse Procedure
WCDHB Management Of Patient/Client/Resident Abuse & Neglect Procedure.

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