Another pair of eyes in the room: do patients want a chaperone for intimate examinations?

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Abstract
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Another pair of eyes in the room: do patients want a chaperone for intimate examinations?

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Organisation
University of Wollongong, Illawarra and Southern Practice Research Network

Aims & rationale/Objectives
Intimate physical examinations are common in general practice. Major Australian professional indemnity insurers and recent Australian Medical Board Sexual Boundaries Guidelines suggest that doctors should offer a chaperone for intimate examinations. We present the first study investigating Australian patient attitudes toward chaperone use in General Practice.

Methods
Thirteen randomly selected general practices each invited 30 female and 30 male adult patients to complete a questionnaire. The instrument covered a range of intimate examination types; therefore separate male and female questionnaires were used. The data collection tools were informed by a literature review and data were analysed using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and cluster-adjusted regression.

Principal findings
The response rate was 94% (n=732; 51% female). The proportion of patients wanting a chaperone was similar across examination types and patient gender; 31.5% for Pap or vaginal examination; 30.4% for breast examination; 33% for female ano-rectal examination; 24.5% for male genital examination; 24.5% for male ano-rectal examination. Both men and women were significantly more likely to want a chaperone with their usual GP compared with a GP they did not know well for all examination types (p<0.05). The proportion of patients who preferred that a chaperone remain outside the curtain was 41.4%; 13.3% inside the curtain; 45.3% had no preference.

Implications
This data is important to inform practice policy, GP training and potential future policy regarding chaperone use in Australia. Some of these findings may appear counterintuitive to GPs, and further research to understand them is warranted.

Presentation type
Paper

Session theme
Perceptions and practices in women's health

Webcast

Session details
11:45am Thu 24 July, Torrens Room

Citation

Other Conference abstract(s) by the same author(s)
Poster presentation: MacKinnon D, Bonney A, Mayne D, Barnett S
Weighing in General Practice: Does it have an impact on weight management?
2014 PHC Research Conference, University of Wollongong, Illawarra and Southern Practice Research Network.

Poster presentation: Williams F, Mahfouz C, Pearson R, Ivers R
The attitude of patients over 65yrs to ceasing long term sleeping tablets