

Responding to a Patient's request for female or specific health care providers



1. Purpose

This guideline outlines the process for care providers when responding to patient requests for female or specific health care providers.

2. Definitions

A request for female care provider is when the patient requests a female as their preferred clinician provider.

A request for specific health care provider is when the patient requests a specific clinician irrespective of gender.

3. Responsibilities

- All staff (including clerical/midwifery/nursing and medical clinicians) are responsible for:
 - Documenting requests on iPM
 - Documenting requests in medical files
 - Communicating and giving information to patients and their families

4. Guideline

4.1. Routine practice

When a request has been identified, and the woman presents for her appointment:

- Respectful informal discussion in a private area to clarify a woman's concerns and offer alternatives is recommended.
- This discussion:
 - is intended to ensure the woman's needs and concerns are identified and understood.
 - provides an opportunity to clarify the expectations of both the woman and the organisation
 - includes the information that choice of provider gender cannot routinely be offered in:
 - operating theatres
 - birthing suites
 - Emergency department
 - specialised or urgent circumstances
- The outcome must be documented on the ALERTS page in the medical record.
- Women who request a female health care provider can be provided with an information sheet about provider gender issues. - **Consumer fact sheet: When you want to see a female doctor.**

4.2. Responding to specific requests

Discussion may assist understanding of the woman's request to be seen by a female health care provider or specific clinician.

The request may be based on:

- culture
- personal history
- past experiences

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- gender generalisations (e.g. beliefs that women doctors are more sensitive)

4.3. Requests received on the day of appointment

If a request is received on the day of an appointment the woman will be asked to discuss the request with the clinic staff.

Options:

1. continue with her appointment as booked or
2. re-book if deemed appropriate by the clinic staff

NB: To facilitate the best possible care and communication discussion with the clinic nurse/ midwife and/or medical staff is preferable.

4.4. Elective appointments

If a request is received prior to an appointment, a comment can be added to the Dependent Resources tab of the appointment screen on iPM to note the request and an appointment facilitated with the requested clinician if possible.

4.5. When a woman declines to have a physical examination

A woman always has the right to refuse care offered, and such refusal should be fully informed.

A woman has the right to decline any form of physical examination including breast or vaginal examination performed by the allocated clinician. It is not best practice for the examination to be performed by another clinician not involved in the full consultation:

- It may be necessary to make a further appointment for full assessment
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4.6. Acute, urgent situations or exceptional circumstances

If a request is received in an acute or urgent situation, the woman should be advised that such requests cannot normally be met especially in the

- Emergency department
- Operating theatres
- Birthing suites

The senior registrar on duty should be advised if refusal arises.

- Senior Registrar may (exceptional circumstances) request another health care provider to see the woman.
- Senior Registrar may contact on-call consultant for advice.
- Requests should be balanced with availability of staff to safely provide care.

5. Evaluation, monitoring and reporting of compliance to this guideline

Feedback to Consumer Advocate

6. References

- Consumer fact sheet: When you want to see a female doctor

7. Legislation/Regulations related to this guideline

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Not applicable

8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Request for Female or Specific Health Care Providers Referral Pathway

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Provider Gender Referral Pathway

