

Physical conditions conducive to confidentiality and privacy

It is essential that patients have auditory and visual privacy during consultations. Visual privacy includes physical privacy for patients and the privacy of patient health information, and auditory privacy refers to ensuring a patient's conversation with a member of the practice team cannot be overheard by an inappropriate person, such as another patient or a staff member.

RACGP 4th Edition Standards

5.1.2A✓ *The physical facilities of our practice support patient privacy and confidentiality.*

5.1.2B✓ *Visual and auditory privacy of consultations and treatments is supported.*

Assessment methods

- Tour of the practice premises

Surveyors will tour the practice on the day of the visit to review practice facilities, and should be able to see evidence of how the physical facilities, and the design and layout of the premise, supports privacy and confidentiality. This will include curtains and screens in the consultation and treatment rooms being seen.

- Interview with GPs and practice staff

Surveyors will interview GPs, clinical and administrative staff, who should all be able to confidently describe how the practice supports patient privacy and confidentiality. This will include the use of screens or curtains, gowns and sheets when a patient is asked to undress for an examination, as well as the importance of conversations being conducted in a private room, if need be.

Meeting the Standards

Visual privacy can be provided to patients during a clinical examination by the use of a gown or sheet, and an adequate curtain or screen. Members of the clinical team must be sensitive to patient dignity when patients are required to undress, and then dress again, in the presence of a GP or practice nurse. Consultations should not be able to be overheard by others. In practice areas where auditory privacy is not possible, such as the nurses' treatment bays, patients should be offered a private room for conversations as required.

Best practice

Auditory privacy within the practice can be enhanced by the use of appropriate background music to mask conversations between staff members, and between staff and patients. It is recommended that consultation rooms have solid doors to ensure auditory privacy. Ideally, patient records and computer screens will be positioned in such a way as to ensure that confidential information is not readily visible to anybody but the appropriate members of the practice team. Ideally, the practice's policies and procedures manual will outline information in regard to privacy provisions and relevant processes.