

From: Rod Phillips [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 29 March 2018 11:43 AM
To: medboardconsultation <medboardconsultation@ahpra.gov.au>
Subject: Draft revised guidelines re Sexual Boundaries in the doctor patient relationship

Please accept the following submission

Clause 7 Dot point 8 – using gloves for genital examinations– proposal to expand this paragraph

Current wording in draft:

“When conducting a physical examination, good medical practice involves:

- ***Using gloves when examining genitals or conducting internal examinations”***

Why is there a need for change:

This is an interesting statement that needs to be reworded as it does not currently describe good medical practice accurately. It is a suprisingly complex question, and speaking with different professionals will reveal widely varying habits and views, often heavily based on their own practice. And information is lacking.

Families: There is an absence of reliable data about what families expect in any of the varying circumstances described below. Certainly in some settings, e.g. examination of children as described below, many practitioners routinely do not use gloves and when asked state that no parents are expecting them to.

Infection: Most people would agree that gloves should be worn in the presence of overt infective disease (either patient or doctor). When there is no evidence of infective disease, the suggestion that gloves should always be worn specifically for genital examination and not for other examination is not readily supported by data.

Reasons why doctors choose not to wear gloves in settings such as those described below:

- lack of perceived benefit.
- consistency with medical and family expectations in settings such as those described below.
- the importance of maintaining the child’s confidence in their examination and medical care. Putting on gloves can provoke anxiety and aversion to further examination in some children, often unpredictably.
- efficiency

Proposal – that this paragraph at Clause 7 Dot point 8 be expanded to the following text so as to more clearly explain what good medical practice requires:

“When examining the genitalia, there are times when use of gloves are a requirement of good medical practice: e.g.

- ***internal examinations.***
- ***intimate examination of mucosal areas.***
- ***examination in the context of overt infective disease.***
- ***examination when the doctor has any potentially transmissible conditions on their own hands.***

There are other times when most practitioners and families would not expect the use of gloves: e.g.

- ***routine examination of infants or young children such as the six-week baby check.***
- ***examination of boys for testicular descent.***
- ***examinations of babies with genital birthmarks.***

- ***examination of the genitalia briefly and superficially as part of a generalised examination for a condition such as psoriasis.***

Practitioners need to consider the use of gloves for any genital examination, taking into account the circumstances of the examination and the expectations of the patients they examine.

Rod Phillips