

Document Control

Title			
Carers and Comforters - IR(ME)R 2017 Standard Operating Procedure			
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Version	Date Issued	Status	Comment / Changes / Approval
0.1	March 2018	Draft	Initial version for consultation
0.2	March 2018	Draft	Amendments made following consultation
1.0	May 2018	Final	Final version signed off by Lead Clinician for Radiology
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Superseded Documents			
Issue Date May 2018		Review Date May 2021	Review Cycle Three years
Consulted with the following stakeholders: (list all)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical Audit Lead Radiology • Radiologists • Radiographers • Practitioner Referrers • Medical Physics 			
Approval and Review Process			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Clinician in Clinical Radiology 			
Local Archive Reference G:\Radiology Public Drive			
Local Path Radiology Clinical Governance /IRMER/ SOP Carers and Comforters			
Filename Standard Operating Procedure Carers and Comforters - IR(ME)R V1.0 May 2018			
Policy categories for Trust's internal		Tags for Trust's internal website (Bob)	

website (Bob) Diagnostic Imaging Trust's internal website	Referral, Referrer, Practitioner, Operator, Medical Physics,
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1. Introduction

The Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations {IR(ME)R} 2000 were introduced to protect patients against the hazards associated with the use of ionising radiation in medical settings. The updated version in 2017 adds extra legislation to also cover exposures that involve the use of Carers and Comforters.

It is sometimes necessary for a Carer or Comforter to be present during an x-ray examination, either to hold or to reassure the patient. This may be a relative or friend or a member of staff. All Carers and Comforters present during the examination will receive a small dose of radiation.

Carers and Comforters under IR(ME)R 2017 are defined as “individuals knowingly and willingly incurring an exposure to ionising radiation by helping, other than as part of their occupation, in the support and comfort of individuals undergoing or having undergone exposure”.

This Standard Operating Procedure is intended for the guidance of the use of Carers and Comforters.

There are legal implications that need to be considered and so it is important that protocols and guidelines are followed to ensure continuity of evidence is upheld.

2. Purpose

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been written to:

- Clarify the process involved in obtaining authorisation for undertaking examinations with the use of Carers and Comforters
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of those involved in using Carers and Comforters
- To ensure that the Carer and Comforter is fully informed prior to exposure of the implications of radiation risk, and or patient benefit, of being a Carer or Comforter.
- To establish an annual dose constraint for Carers and Comforters, and to ensure that no Carer and Comforter exceeds this dose constraint in any one calendar year.

3. Scope

- This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) relates to the following staff groups who may be involved in requesting or undertaking examinations using a Carer and Comforter. Radiographers (Operators)
- Radiologists (Practitioners)

- Medical Referrers
- Non-Medical Referrers

4. Location

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to examinations involving carers and comforters in the Northern Devon Healthcare Trust.

5. Equipment

Radiology request forms both paper and electronic.

Carers and Comforters consent forms

All Radiology imaging equipment on the above sites including General and A+E x-ray units, AMX Mobile imaging machines, Dental imaging equipment, Mobile Image Intensifiers, Interventional fluoroscopy equipment, CT and DEXA.

6. Procedure

6.1. Carers and Comforters.

Carers and Comforters must have the risks and benefits of being present during the exposure to radiation properly explained to them before the exposure is taken.

They must be able to incur the exposure both knowingly and willingly.

The Carer and Comforter must read and sign the carers and comforters consent form.

The operator must answer fully any additional questions that the Carer or Comforter may have before the exposure.

The Carer or Comforter has the right to refuse to be such following full explanation of the risk and benefit of the exposure.

No person should be a Carer or Comforter if they are, or it is possible that they may be pregnant.

All Imaging should be performed in accordance with departmental Standard Operating Procedures and Protocols.

6.2. Carers and Comforters who are Parents, Guardians or Family members

The Operator, who initiates radiographic exposure, will explain the risks and benefits of being exposed to the exposure of ionising radiation prior to the examination.

It should be emphasised that the risk of cancer induction is extremely low, and an indication of approximate average UK background equivalent radiation time given. (UK background equivalent radiation times are shown in Appendix A for Carers and Comforters, for various radiological examinations).

No examination should result in a Carer and Comforter receiving a dose in excess of 0.15mSv (approximately 3 weeks UK average background radiation). If the individual agrees to act as a Carer and Comforter, they must sign a consent form (<G:\Radiology Clinical Governance\IRMER\Carers and Comforters\General Information for Carers and Comforters Supporting Patients Consent Forms.docx>).

This consent form will also explain the risks and records the Patients details, examination, Radiographer, exposure factors/dose and protection provided; this will be scanned onto the Patients CRIS event and saved on the radiology G:drive for audit and dose monitoring purposes <G:\Radiology Clinical Governance\IRMER\Carers and Comforters\2018 Completed Comforters and Carers forms\Parents and Other>

The Carer and Comforter must wear a lead rubber apron and thyroid shield. Lead equivalence of at least 0.25mm must be used for exposures <100kV. Lead equivalence of at least 0.35mm must be worn for exposures >100kV.

6.3. Carers and Comforters who are Staff

Under IR(ME)R 17 Staff are not classed as carers and comforters, however for purposes of audit and continued monitoring of staff groups' exposure to radiation it has been decided that staff working at NDHT will be treated the same as other comforters and carers. This means that as above the risks and benefits of the exposure will be explained, lead rubber protection will be given and a consent form signed; this will then be scanned onto the radiology G:drive in the appropriate folder to ensure continued monitoring of staff dose levels.

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<G:\Radiology Clinical Governance\IRMER\Comforters and Carers\2018 Completed Comforters and Carers forms\Hospital Staff>

For staff working on SCBU the patient name, examination, exposure factors and where the nurse was stood holding the baby should be recorded in the folder on the mobile machine; this will then be used to update departmental records, alternatively a comforters and carers consent form can be used for locum staff and staff that infrequently hold on SCBU and scanned onto the Radiology G: drive.

<G:\Radiology Clinical Governance\IRMER\Carers and Comforters\2018 Completed Carers and Comforters forms\SCBU Staff>

6.4. Cares and Comforters under the age of 18.

Whilst it is always preferable to have a Carer and Comforter who is over the age of 18 if the Parent is under 18 then careful consideration should be given to them incurring the exposure “knowingly and willingly”.

If the Carer and Comforter is the Parent and is under the age of 18: if they have had adequate information given to them by the Operator, and they understand the implications of this information before the exposure takes place, then they may sign the Carers and Comforters consent form and be present during the exposure. Documentation must be made on CRIS and the consent form that the comforter or carer is under 18 and care taken to record both the exposure factors and resultant dose on the form.

The Carer and Comforter must wear a lead rubber apron and thyroid shield. Lead equivalence of at least 0.25mm must be used for exposures <100kV. Lead equivalence of at least 0.35mm must be worn for exposures >100kV.

Careful consideration also needs to be given to the type of examination that a Carer and Comforter under the age of 18 is supporting the patient for, for example, whether it is a low dose procedure such as a chest x-ray; so incurring a small dose, or a procedure such as a skeletal survey which might incur multiple exposures and so considerably higher dose.

6.5. Dose Constraints

All imaging where Carers and Comforters are utilised should be monitored to ensure that repeated doses are not incurred by the same people repeatedly acting as Carers and Comforters. A total annual calendar year dose constraint of 1mSv should be applied for any individual Carer and Comforter.

7. References

- Ionising (Medical Exposures) Regulations 2017. Statutory Instruments 2017 No 1322 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1322/pdfs/ukxi_20171322_en.pdf
- Radiology authorisation and IRMER assessment working practice document.

- Ionising (Medical Exposures) Regulations 2000. Statutory Instruments 2000 No 1059 – <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2000/20001059.htm>
- IRMER – Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposures) Amendment Regulations 2006
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/uksi_20062523_en.pdf

8. Associated Documentation

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust Policies for:

- Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust Radiation Policy
- Northern Devon Healthcare SOP 'Making a Referral for Diagnostic Imaging'

9. Appendix A) Carer and Comforter UK Effective Doses and UK background equivalent radiation times

Examination	Effective Dose (mSv)	UK background equivalent radiation time
Skeletal survey	0.15	3 weeks
L-spine complete	0.02	3 days
Abdomen AP	0.01	2 days
Pelvis AP	0.01	2 days
C-spine complete	0.002	7 hours
T-spine complete	0.015	2 days
Chest X-ray	0.0005	2 hours
Extremity	0.0005	2 hours