

Lone Working Policy For Students Undertaking Visits To A Patient's Home

Introduction

The MB ChB Programme at the University of Manchester is committed to ensuring the safety of students visiting a patient's home during community placements. Such visits provide valuable information about patient's health and social setting and through Years 1-4 most students are accompanied by a clinical partner. However in Year 5, or if a clinical partner is not available, it may be acceptable to undertake visiting alone providing suitable safeguarding is addressed.

Definitions

'Lone workers', as defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), are "those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision"

'Supervisor' applies to the responsible clinicians, allied health professionals and practice staff.

Aim

This policy is aimed at both students and their supervising tutors and offers guidance to ensure that risk to lone workers is reduced to the lowest level practicable. It should be followed in conjunction with additional guidance from the [MBChB handbook](#) including '[Personal Safety on Placements](#)' and although aimed specifically at lone workers, the advice is equally applicable to pairs or groups of students.

Objectives

This guidance is not intended to be exhaustive but outlines the responsibilities of supervisors and students and advice on dealing with common situations.

Responsibilities of the supervisor

1. *Determine the need for lone working.* Ensure that there is an educational need to undertake a home visit alone, that no other setting is appropriate and accompaniment by a colleague is not practical.
2. *Assess prior risk.* In advance of the visit assess potential risk firstly from the individual, including a history of known violent/ aggressive behaviour or risk of infection and secondly risk from the environment including visiting isolated areas associated with a high risk to personal well-being/ property or aggressive pets. Advice should be sought from practice staff that may have additional knowledge of the home circumstances. All visits should be prearranged following discussion with the patient including the timing, purpose of the visit and the identify of the lone worker.
3. *Minimise risk during the visit and ensure safe return:* Discuss actions the lone worker should take on arriving, during and after the visit (see responsibilities of the lone worker). Share contact details and discuss how best to contact the tutor should a problem arise. Avoid scheduling visits in the early morning or late afternoon and set out and share the lone worker's itinerary including expected time of return so their

whereabouts can be identified, ensuring a system is in place to log their return to the placement.

4. Report Incidents: If problems arise they should be fully reported to the Medical School in a timely and reliable manner

Responsibilities of lone workers

Students should also take responsibility for their own safety and the use of common sense and professional values should be applied.

1. Prior to a visit: If a lone worker is concerned that a visit may put them at risk a discussion should occur with the supervisor resulting in either additional safety measures being put in place or the student declining to undertake the visit. Before leaving the placement the student should familiarise his or herself with local protocols including how to contact the supervisor in an emergency. Mobile phone, car registrations and itinerary should be shared with the placement staff and lone workers should sign in and out. Referring to [further guidance](#) from the Medical School be considerate and sensitive in dress and behaviour to local customs or beliefs. Carry ID and keep valuables safe or out of sight. Plan a safe route and if travelling by car park in a safe, well lit place.

2. During and after a visit: On arrival ID should be presented, the student should introduce themselves, identify they have the correct patient and the reason for the visit. Lone workers should be aware of how to exit the building should problems arise and if feeling threatened remove themselves from the situation immediately. On return to the placement students should verify their safe return and sign in.

3. Report incidents: if a lone worker has experienced any difficulties these should be reported to and discussed with the supervisor and/or Medical School to allow suitable action to be taken and prevent further problems.

Adapted from:

Lone working Policy For Medical Students: Dr Philip Burns 2007

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>