Special Observations and 1:1 Support

Innovation and excellence in health and care

Addenbrooke’s Hospital | Rosie Hospital
Information for Patients, Relatives and Carers

What are Special Observations?

Here at Cambridge University Hospital (CUH) we want to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our patients and there may be times during admission to hospital when a patient will require a more intensive level of supervision and support. We call this Special Observations or Specialling (as it will be referred to throughout this leaflet). Specialling means that a patient will require a member of staff close by at all times to reduce the risk of hurting themselves or others.

There are many reasons a patient may require specialling. When someone becomes very unwell, with an infection for example, they may become confused and sometimes aggressive known as delirium. This often starts suddenly but improves when the condition causing it gets better. If your relative or the person you care for have conditions such as dementia which affects their memory or a learning disability, it can be difficult for them to fully understand discussions about their care and their need to be in hospital. Understanding and decision making can also be impaired following an acquired brain injury. Pain and anxiety too, have a significant effect on the ability to think and understand.

Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberties

The Mental Capacity Act (2005) and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (2009) provide the legal framework for the care and treatment of patients who, for the reasons above, are unable to give informed consent for treatment or interventions such as specialling.

We will always try to explain why we are specialling and we will assess and record the patient’s ability to understand; this is called a Capacity Assessment. Specialling will be used only after careful assessment of risk and need and in the best interest of the patient at that time. Specialling will be done in the least restrictive way for the shortest possible time. If you have any concerns regarding this or require any further information, please speak to the senior sister/charge nurse.

What happens when a patient is being specialled?

Members of the nursing team will take it in turns to provide continuous 1:1 support or an enhanced level of supervision. They will get to know the patient as an individual and, where possible, staff will change every two hours. In addition to attending to nursing care and mobility needs, staff can also help pass the time with suitable activities. They will try to ensure the patient is active during the day and well rested at night. This reduces distress and confusion.
Being accompanied at all times can feel stressful but it is important we keep the patient and those around them safe. If you have any questions or concerns about the level of support, please raise them with the nurse in charge. The nurses and doctors looking after the patient will review their need for continued supervision three times a day, and will stop this level of support as soon as they feel it is safe.

**How can relatives/carers help?**

We do not expect relatives to undertake specialling unless they are happy to do so. A familiar face or family member can often be a very reassuring and calming influence. Therefore when relatives are visiting, and if they are happy to do so, a patient may be left under their supervision with support from the nursing team as needed. We will try where possible to be flexible with visiting times to accommodate individual needs. However, this may not always be possible. If a relative or carer does undertake specialling it is important they notify nursing staff before leaving to ensure the support is continued.

Ways relatives can positively support patients and help staff ensure holistic needs are met include:

- Filling in This is me or Patient Passport where applicable. This is a document that helps us learn from patients, families and carers about the patient as a person, their hobbies or things they like doing, for example.
- Give staff your top five tips and management strategies to help them communicate and support personalised care. Inform staff of the patient’s normal routines such as bedtime, wake time and naps to help incorporate them into care.
- Tell staff how the patient likes to bathe, dress and their mobility needs
- Indicate any food preferences the patient may have and inform staff of the patients usual bowel routine
- Ensure Nursing staff are aware of any medications (especially painkillers) the patient may have been prescribed at home.
- Let staff know about any interests and support with resources to help ensure these can be continued whilst in hospital
- Inform staff how inappropriate or difficult behaviours are normally managed at home.

Please speak to the nurse in charge if you would like any further information or support.
CUH would like to acknowledge the work of Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust and Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust in the development of this leaflet.

Reference:

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We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

**Other formats:**

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

**Document history**

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