

How do you Correctly Identify a Patient

In the past there have been errors where the wrong patient has received either the wrong blood, medication, consultation, test or procedure. These errors have occurred because the patient has not been correctly identified.

To ensure you have the right patient and the correct documents relating to that patient, please follow the steps below whenever:

- allocating a wristband identification
- administering medications or blood products
- taking blood samples and other specimens
- providing any other treatments, procedures (including x-rays & scopes) or consultations (outpatients/private consulting rooms).
- collecting / delivering a patient
- handing over a patient to another department eg from ED to Operating Suite/Ward

Steps to correctly identify a patient and their relevant documents

STEP 1 ASK THE PATIENT:

1. What is your name?
2. When were you born? *and where applicable*
3. Why are you here?

STEP 2 MATCH UP THE ANSWERS GIVEN IN STEP 1 WITH ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Is the name, DOB and procedure (where relevant) stated by the patient in step 1 the same as what is printed on any relevant documents such as the:

- patients wristband identification (ALWAYS check)
 - medical record
 - clinic / procedure list
 - referral/order letter / sheet
 - medication sheet
 - label on: medications / blood products / contrast / isotope
 - previous x-rays / test results
- Before you ask the 3 questions in Step 1 you may wish to tell the patient that you will be asking a few questions to ensure they are correctly identified and that you have all the correct documents. This may reduce any concerns the patient has about having their identity verified so often.
- It is important that you let the patient answer the questions in step 1. Don't presume you know their name & DOB. This is called "Open Ended Questioning" (see below for more information). The first two questions, if answered in an open-ended way, give staff two pieces of information that when combined significantly reduce the risk of patient identification error. The third question is helpful to ensure that the right procedure or process is applied to the patient, and that the patient has an understanding of his/her condition and treatment.
- You need to be very thorough when identifying **NESB and elderly / confused patients**. Many of our miss-identification errors have occurred with NESB / elderly patients who have not understood the questions they have been asked. Interpreters are often needed for NESB patients and should be pre-arranged where possible. Interpreter service phone numbers 95159500 (Eastern Zone) 98286088 (Western Zone).

Open Ended Questioning Open ended questions can be defined as Questions which encourage the respondent to provide their own answers. Closed questions, on the other hand, are ones which encourage an answer such as "yes" or "no". An open ended example would be "Can you please tell me your name?", while an example of a closed question would be "Is your name Jane Smith?" In the busy hospital environment, it is understandable that staff may view closed questions as time saving, but this has the potential to increase the risk of a patient being incorrectly identified. For example, a patient named "Jean Smith" could mistakenly answer "Yes" to the question "Are you Jane Smith?"

Feedback We are always trying to improve what we do. Please send any comments / feedback about this document to: Wendy Jamieson, SSWAHS Area Manager Quality, Clinical Governance Unit, ph 02-9515 9339 wendy.jamieson@email.cs.nsw.gov.au
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