

Chaperones/Clinical Observers in the practice of intimate examinations in Australian Women's health – results of a scoping literature review

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INTRODUCTION

Chaperones/clinical observers play an integral role in clinical practice. In 2020, RANZCOG amended their best practice guidelines for gynaecological examinations. This included a change in nomenclature of the third party from 'chaperone' to 'observer', accompanied by a change in purpose of their role (1). To determine contemporary best practice and the use of third parties in context of intimate examinations, a scoping review was conducted.

AIMS

1. To appraise contemporary patient/practitioners' expectations regarding chaperone/clinical observer utilisation during intimate examinations
2. To determine preferred terminology when referring to the third party

METHODS

We utilised PubMed, MEDLINE, Clinical key and Cochrane Library databases, with the search string ("chaperone" OR "clinical observer") AND ('intimate examination'), including MeSH terminology.

DISCUSSION

This scoping review was performed following updated RANZCOG guidance on gynaecological examinations.

Although some studies (n=4) examined the use of chaperones/clinical observers in O&G, it was notable that there was no Aus/NZ published research in this area.

Whilst international studies may be applicable to Aus/NZ practice, given the importance of intimate examinations in O&G and the sensitivities in how these are conducted, we consider this to be an evidence gap in current practice.

Despite RANZCOG's recommendation on nomenclature, the vast majority of contemporary literature continues to use 'chaperone' rather than 'observer' (1); current data on Aus/NZ health professionals' preferences are unknown.

RESULTS

Our review found no articles relating to the use/terminology of chaperones/observers in the practice of O&G in the Aus/NZ context.

- 4 studies were specific to O&G, all outside Aus/NZ (figure 2)
- There were no articles found exploring preference of nomenclature when referring to the third party
- No articles used the terminology 'observer'

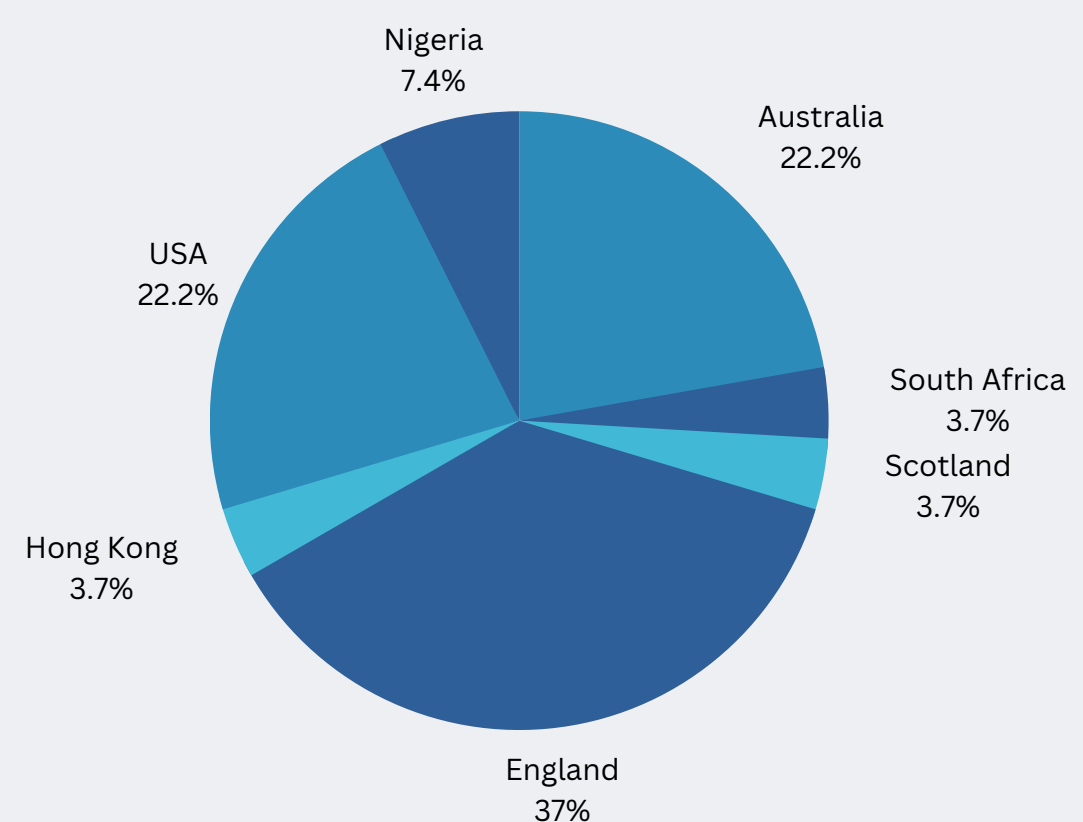


Figure 1. Countries of included studies

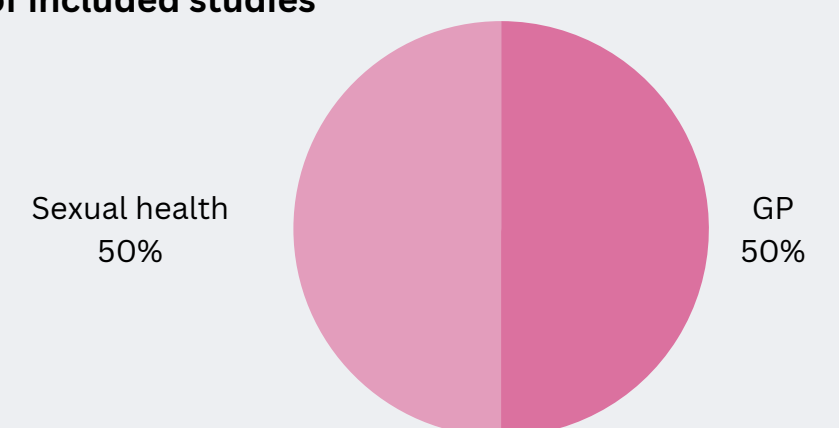


Figure 2. Disciplines of Australian articles

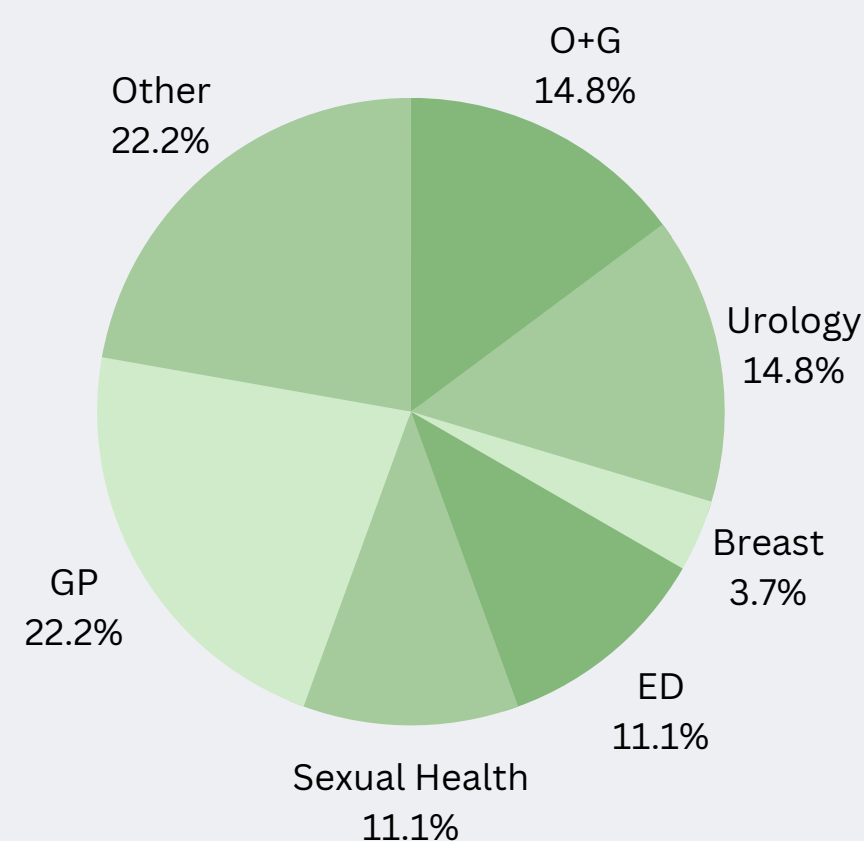
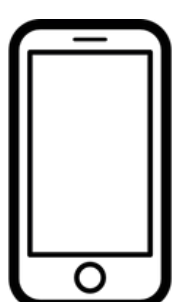


Figure 3. Disciplines of included studies

REFERENCES

1. Gynaecological examinations and procedures - RANZCOG [Internet]. 2020. Available from: <https://ranzcof.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Gynaecological-examinations-and-procedures.pdf>



Please help research in this important area of clinical practice.

You are invited to participate in an anonymous on-line survey about your views and experience with chaperones/clinical observers. Please use your smart phone/device's camera to link to the survey.