

Observer Policy with Medical Affairs – Credentials
Hamilton Health Sciences & St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

A. PURPOSE:

To identify the process for providing Observers with educational opportunities to observe and gain insight into how healthcare is provided and/or how various hospital departments function.

To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Observer while engaged in an observership at Hamilton Health Sciences and/or St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton.

To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the supervising Professional Staff (the "Sponsor") to ensure that Observers are provided with the appropriate supervision and are involved in activities that are appropriate to their role.

B. OBSERVERS:

Eligible applicants for an observership include:

- Actively practicing Canadian or Internationally licensed MD
- International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who have been accepted to the McMaster University Post Graduate Medical Education Program
- International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who have completed the Medical Council of Canada QE1 examination (MCCQE1)

Ineligible applicants are as follows:

- All Medical Students (CA/US/International)
 - All Medical Residents (CA/US/International)
 - Undergraduate students or student learners
- * Should be supported through McMaster University's electives program

C. PROCEDURES:

All applicants requesting an observational experience must meet the requirements set out below and must be met with the approval of the Department Chief and Professional Staff Sponsor. It is the Observer's responsibility to secure a Sponsor for the term of their observership. Once a Professional Staff member agrees to be the designated Sponsor, he/she will advise the Observer to contact the Credentials Office to obtain the required paperwork.

All documentation related to the application must be completed by the Observer and submitted to the Credentials Office a minimum of two weeks in advance of the anticipated or requested start date.

Each applicant will submit the following documentation to request an observership:

- Observership Request Form (Appendix A)
- Statement of Agreement and Acknowledgement of Role & Responsibilities (Appendix B)
- Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix C)
- Completion of Preplacement Observation Health Forms (Appendix D)
- Copy of Curriculum Vitae
- Copy of Degree
- Passport Size Photo
- Payment of the Observer Application Fee (fees not applicable to Canadian bases actively practicing physicians)

D. DEFINITIONS:

“Observer” means an individual attending either Hospital for their specific purpose of gaining knowledge about the provision of healthcare and/or the practice of medicine in Canadian hospitals.

“Professional Staff” means a member of the Medical, Dental Midwifery or Extended Nursing Staff to whom hospital privileges have been granted.

“Sponsor” means the Professional Staff member who has taken on the responsibility of supervising an observer throughout the duration of their observership.

“Department Chief” means the medical leader of the department in which the observership is occurring.

E. Roles & Responsibilities of a Sponsor:

The Sponsor must provide adequate supervision and support to the Observer which includes:

- Ensuring the Observer is accompanied at all times
- Being able to explain the various procedures, processes or clinical interactions being observed and willing to answer any questions the Observer may have
- Being able to intervene and/or prevent the Observer from behaving in a way that is unsafe, inappropriate or in contravention of each hospitals respective policies, procedures or expectations.

If the Observer will be present during any contact with a patient, the Sponsor must introduce the Observer to the patient as a visiting Physician/IIMG (as appropriate) and explain the reason for their presence.

In accordance with Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, the Supervisor must obtain express consent from the patient, or the patient's substitute decision-maker where applicable, before permitting the Observer to observe patient care, or to have access to patient records. Consent can be oral, but must be recorded in the patient's medical record. Each patient is entitled to withhold or withdraw consent. A patient's decision to provide, withhold, or withdraw consent must not alter their patient's access to healthcare in any manner.

In addition to complying with this Policy, a Sponsor must comply with the applicable policies, guidelines and/or expectations of his/her regulatory College.

F. Roles & Responsibilities of an Observer:

An Observer is **not** permitted, in any circumstance, to provide or participate in patient care. Treatment of patients includes, but is not limited to:

- Taking medical history
- Conducting physician examinations
- Diagnosing or treating a patient's condition
- Ordering, preparing or administering drugs
- Documenting in patients' health records, either in electronic or hard copy format
- Having independent access to health records, either in electronic or hard copy format
- Performing or assisting in surgical procedures, or diagnostic patient interventions
- Obtaining consent
- Providing healthcare advice

When on hospital premises, an Observer must be accompanied by his/her Sponsor **at all times**. The Sponsor must be within proximity to monitor the Observer in order to intervene and/or prevent the Observer from behaving in a way that is unsafe, inappropriate or in contravention of each hospital's respective policies, procedures or expectations.

An Observer is **not** considered an employee of Hamilton Health Sciences or St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and therefore is not:

- Entitled to salary, benefits, reimbursement of expenses or other forms of compensation
- Covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)
- Covered under either organization's liability insurance
- Entitled to receive educational credit or certification from the organization for time spent observing
- Entitled to access Occupational Health Services

G. Refusal or Termination of Observership

Hamilton Health Sciences, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and/or the Sponsor may refuse or terminate an observership at any time at their sole discretion.

Concerns regarding the appropriateness of the Observer's conduct or behaviour will be addressed by the Sponsor, and if necessary, by the Sponsoring Department Chief.

H. Computer Access & Dictation

Observers are not permitted to have computer access at the Hospital as they are not permitted to participate in any direct patient care. Observers are also not permitted to dictate any patient records.

DEVELOPED BY:	Medical Affairs – Credentials
APPROVAL:	Joint Common Credentials Committee - HHS/SJHH Medical Advisory Committee – HHS Medical Advisory Committee - SJHH
DISTRIBUTION:	All Professional Staff, All Observers
REVIEW:	Annual
REVISED:	July 2023