

# INTERNAL MEMORANDUM



Government of South Australia

SA Health

Reference No: 2013-01674 eA809779

**TO: ALL MENTAL HEALTH STAFF**  
**FROM: CHIEF PSYCHIATRIST, SA HEALTH**  
**RE: USE OF POSEY RESTRAINT NETS**  
**DATE: 2 SEPTEMBER 2013**

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## **Background:**

There has been a recent increase in the number of staff approaching the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist (OCP) in relation to the use of Posey nets for reasons other than safe transport. This has involved the use of Posey nets in emergency department settings for the purpose of restraint.

## **Summary of issues:**

1. The principle of least restrictive practice must be adhered to at all times
2. Restraint has no therapeutic value, can cause harm to the individual and places staff at risk of injury
3. The Posey net represents a form of mechanical restraint. Its use must be guided by clear indicators, protocols, authorisations and procedures that cover safe application, management of the individual, removal of restraints and mandatory reporting. This is to occur within the broader context of service guidelines for minimisation and elimination of restraint

## **Legislation:**

Under the Mental Health Act 2009, the aim of mental health services is to provide the least restrictive environment possible for care to be safely delivered to consumers and where restrictive practices are used, as a last resort only. The use of restraints is monitored by the Chief Psychiatrist and consequently, all restraint is to be reported on SLS. Immediate notifications to the OCP occur through the SLS on specific criteria and further information may be sought direct from the relevant service by the OCP.

## **Manufacturers' recommendations:**

The manufacturers of the Posey net suggest there are a number of contraindications to its use and this includes: if the person has any fractures, an ostomy or colostomy, G tubes, hernias, COPD, post-surgical drains and incisions or IV sites. A person 4'6" (137cm) or less in height and or constant observation and monitoring cannot be maintained are also contraindications.

Under the manufacturer's instructions, the adverse reactions cited are:

*"severe emotional, psychological or physical problems may occur: if the applied device is uncomfortable; of if it severely limits movement."*

They recommend:

*"if the patient is likely to cause injury to him/herself or others, get help form qualified medical authority to find an alternate intervention or method of restraint."*

Conversely, the manufacturers indicator for use of the a Posey net is:

*"Patients assessed as being in extreme danger of injury to themselves or to others."*

There are a number of risks associated with the use of Posey nets for which mitigating factors are unknown. This includes:

- if the person is a risk to themselves or others it is recommended to find an alternative restraint
- the person is both shackled and 'netted' as the device includes arm and leg shackles
- no clear or safe procedure is available for applying a Posey net to a person while they are actively combative
- administration of nursing care of a person in a Posey net is impaired, including:
  - limited access to toileting
  - inability to administer intramuscular medication
  - inability to safely observe any pressure areas

An instruction video available from the manufacturer via the [www.posey.com](http://www.posey.com) website does not address the placement of a combative person in this type of restraint.

#### **Current use:**

Currently, South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS) and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) use the Posey net for the transport of people who may cause significant disturbance and hence pose a significant risk to themselves and others in the transport process. Alternations are made to the net prior to their use ensuring that a quick release system can be implemented in emergency situation and they have eight points at which they are secured to the barouche.

SAAS do not use a net in an actively combative person; they can only safely apply a Posey net if the person is:

1. already restrained to a barouche and or
2. heavily sedated and or
3. otherwise compliant with the application of the net

RFDS follow very similar guidelines to SAAS in sue and application of the Posey net.

#### **Recommendations:**

Any SA Health facility considering the use of Posey net in the management of challenging behaviour in mental health patients must ensure:

1. clear protocols and procedures that focus on minimisation of restrictive practices and consumer safety are in place
2. all staff are adequately trained in trauma informed care, prevention, de-escalation and alternative interventions for challenging behaviours
3. staff who may be required to implement restraint are trained in the safe application of the mechanical restraints to be used
4. any form of restraint that is used must be approved for use through the appropriate internal processes of the facility, guided by evidence based practice and only used for the purposes intended



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