

Corporate Standard Operating Procedure

Smudging Ceremony

Purpose Statement:

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the practice of “Smudging”. The smudging ceremony is a ceremony performed by some First Nations and Métis people and may be requested by patients and their families receiving health services at The Ottawa Hospital. Although not a traditional ceremony of the Inuit people, some have adopted the practice and may also request a smudging ceremony. Smudging involves brushing smoke created by the burning of sacred medicine plants over parts of the participant’s body as a spiritually cleansing practice.

Note: This SOP has intentionally avoided prescribing cultural protocol to ensure that the procedure can support all teachings and beliefs of the diverse Indigenous communities cared for at The Ottawa Hospital.

The purpose of this SOP is to assist TOH staff to:

- provide culturally and spiritually appropriate care to Indigenous patients and their families that request a smudging ceremony,
- facilitate the procedure for patients to perform a smudging ceremony with their families in accordance with TOH core values and best practice guidelines as well as existing policy and procedures,
- provide the necessary guidelines to ensure that a culturally supportive practice of smudging becomes an available and routine procedure in The Ottawa Hospital for Indigenous patients.

This SOP has been written in alignment with Cancer Care Ontario’s Aboriginal Cancer Strategy III. The stated vision of this strategy is to improve the performance of the cancer system with and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) peoples in Ontario in a way that honours the Indigenous Path of Well-being.

Scope:

This Procedure pertains to any Smudging Ceremonies occurring at The Ottawa Hospital. The following locations are pre-designated for smudging:

Campus	Outdoor Location	Indoor Location
General Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Meditation Garden (near Psychosocial Oncology Program offices, Cancer Building). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Windôcàge Room (Indigenous Community Room) located in the Cancer Centre on the first floor
Civic Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South of P7 parking lot, North of Carling where benches and patio are located 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Solarium in the Maurice Grimes Lodge, 1st floor for all other patients • Birthing Unit Room #12, if the request is coming from a patient of the Birthing Unit
Riverside Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lower Courtyard (East side of the main building, outside of the cafeteria). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boiler House, Main Level, Office G214

Alerts:

For requests for ceremonies to occur in Private Patient Rooms, please refer to **Attachment 1 - Private Patient Room Smudge Ceremony Procedure**.

In instances when the patient is unable to be moved and burning is not permitted in the patient area due to concerns of safety (e.g. in critical care environment where oxygen is in use), the patient and family will be asked to consider a smokeless alternative in the form of a scented spray, oil, medicine pouch, or other culturally relevant object. This should be considered as a last resort as it is not the traditional method of smudging as the purifying element of fire is missing. TOH will look to the patient's family to provide the sprays/oils, however, the Cancer Program's Aboriginal Team will do their best to ensure these are available in their office (C1105) for use in the hospital.

Definitions:

The steps on the Aboriginal **Path of Well-Being** include: health in balance, wellness (emotional and spiritual), active choice, holistic approach, understand root causes and joint and personal responsibility.

Smudging: In Indigenous cultures, this is the practice of purifying the location, patient, healer, helpers, room and objects using smoke obtained by burning sacred medicine plants such as sweet grass, sage, tobacco and/or cedar (any combination of these may be used). Cleansing often initiates healing sessions, provides comfort and relief in times of stress, facilitates the decision-making process and is used in offering prayer. Smudging ceremonies are normally brief but could vary in time depending on the person conducting the ceremony and how many people are attending.

Equipment:

- Cultural items (to be provided by the patient or family)
- Class A fire extinguisher

Procedure(s):

Staff receiving a request for a smudge will:

1. Identify a 'point person' responsible for the implementation of the following procedures to ensure that no patients, staff or visitors are unwillingly exposed to smoke and all fire risks are monitored.
2. Take the lead from the patient or family member as to who will be leading the ceremony (cultural leader, patient, family, etc.),
3. Seek assistance from the TOH Cancer Program's Aboriginal Program Coordinator or Aboriginal Nurse Navigator if support is needed to help coordinate and prepare for the ceremony,
4. Follow the procedure for either outdoor or indoor smudging ceremonies (see below),
5. If the burning of a traditional smudge cannot be performed, a smokeless alternative will be considered (see Alerts for more information),

6. If a staff member is invited to the smudging ceremony, they are expected to follow all cultural protocol at the direction of the person leading the ceremony.

Outdoor Smudging Ceremonies:

If patient is mobile, weather is permitting, and the patient would like to do so, the smudge can take place outside.

1. If staff are aware that an outdoor smudging ceremony will be taking place, they will notify the Security Office of the respective campus and Emergency Management (em@toh.ca).
2. The preferred outdoor location for smudging at each campus is as follows:

General Campus

- The Meditation Garden (near Psychosocial Oncology Program offices, Cancer Building). A culturally relevant smudging space has been established in this location, including access to the four sacred medicines (cedar, sage, tobacco and sweet grass).

Civic Campus

- South of P7 parking lot, North of Carling Street where benches and patio are located.

Riverside Campus

- The Lower Courtyard (East side of the main building).

Indoor Smudging Ceremonies

If patient acuity is critical and the patient is not mobile enough to go outdoors, the weather is not permitting, or patient prefers to smudge inside, designated rooms at each campus have been identified for smudging ceremonies.

General Campus

- The Windôcàge Room (Indigenous Community Room) located in the Cancer Centre on the first floor. The number of occupants shall not exceed 30 people and the means of egress shall be kept clear.

Civic Campus

- Birthing Unit Room #12, if the request is coming from a patient of the Birthing Unit.
- The Solarium in the Maurice Grimes Lodge, 1st floor for all other patients.

Riverside Campus

- Boiler House, Main Level, Office G214.

Private Patient Room Smudging Ceremonies

Smudging ceremonies may be performed in private patient rooms at the Civic or General Campus' only when the patient is not able to access the above options (e.g. at end of life).

Note: Indoor smudging will not take place at the Riverside Campus given the amount of lead time Facilities would need to bypass the fire alarm system and the ambulatory nature of this services at this Campus.

1. When a request for an indoor smudge ceremony is received, the point person will ensure that the following departments are notified (preferably 24 hours in advance of the ceremony):
 - i. Manager of the area where the smudge will be taking place,
 - ii. Security Office of the respective campus,
 - iii. Emergency Management (em@toh.ca),
 - iv. Facilities (10311@toh.ca).
2. Facilities will bypass the detectors on the fire alarm system to prevent accidental activation and adjust the ventilation to minimize migration of smoke to other areas.
3. The Point Person or Manager will ensure staff in the area regarding the ceremony are notified that a smudging ceremony will be taking place.
4. The Point Person will ensure that oxygen is turned off during the ceremony, and any flame is kept clear of combustibles.
5. A Class "A" fire extinguisher shall be close at hand and personnel are trained in its use.
6. The person leading the smudging ceremony will contain the ashes according to their teachings.
7. Facilities shall be contacted immediately upon completion of the ceremony.
8. Facilities will return all systems to their original state. This includes the fire alarm, smoke detectors and ventilation system.

Process Flow:

n/a

Related Documents:

- TOH Smoke-Free Hospital Policy

Related Tools/Forms, etc.:

None

Regulatory or Legislative References:

- Ontario Human Rights Code ISBN 0-7778-6518-1
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1988 c. 31
- Ontario Multi-Faith Committee
- Ontario Fire Code – Vulnerable Care and Treatment Centre
- Smoke Free Ontario Act
- The Algonquin Way Cultural Centre - Algonquins of Pikwakanagan

Attachments:

1. Private Patient Room Smudging Ceremony Instruction Sheet