

Axillary Node Dissection / Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy (Breast or Melanoma)

I. Consent

- Discusses indications and alternatives, including non-operative management
- Discusses general complications (anaesthetic, bleeding, infection)
- Discusses expected postoperative course
- Discusses specific complications (arm mobility, lymphoedema, nerve injury, seroma etc)
- Asks for questions, checks understanding

II. Pre operation planning

- Check correct side marked if appropriate
- Aware of clinical indications
- Aware of significant co-morbidities - obesity, renal disease etc
- Knows relevant results
- Has reviewed relevant imaging

III. Pre operative preparation

- WHO Safety check and team time out
- Consideration of DVT prophylaxis and antibiotic prophylaxis
- Ensures specialised equipment available as required
- Patient is positioned appropriately
- Prepares and drapes appropriately

IV. Exposure and closure

- Makes appropriate axillary incision, length and position
- Careful closure including suture choice and dressing

Intra operative technique: global (G) and task-specific items (T)

- Raises flaps efficiently to expose the axillary contents (T)
- Understands 3-D axillary anatomy (T)
- Exposes the axillary vein adequately (T)
- Performs appropriate clearance depending on indication (T)
- Preserves long thoracic or thoracodorsal nerves (T)
- Preserves or sacrifices intercostobrachial nerves as indicated (T)
- Uses appropriate drainage when closing (T)
- Careful and precise tissue handling (G)
- Secures haemostasis using appropriate techniques (G)
- Utilises assistance, retraction and lighting appropriately (G)

Post operative management

- Records operative note and postoperative plan clearly
- Manages the patient well postop including drain management