Practice Standards

for the
Emergency Nursing Specialist

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CENA
College of Emergency Nursing Australasia

The leader for emergency nursing: A leader of emergency care

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GLOSSARY

Performance Standards: Level of performance expected of nursing actions/behaviours.

Performance Criteria: Elements of behaviour that contribute to the demonstration of achievement of the level of performance.

Domain: Major areas of nursing practice that enable the grouping of related aspects of practice.

Emergency Nurse Specialist (ENS): A registered nurse who has professional preparation and significant experience in the emergency practice setting and who is able to demonstrate the ongoing achievement of the performance standards.

Access/Exit Block: The situation when there are insufficient beds/staff in the hospital to deal with transfer of acute admissions to inpatient beds. This leads to overcrowding in the emergency department (ED) and decreases its ability to function.

Patient: For the purposes of this document the term "patient" reflects synonymous terms such as "client".

Practice Standards for the Emergency Nurse Specialist

FOREWORD

The standards for the emergency nursing specialist identify areas of nursing practice and behaviours that articulate the unique characteristics of the speciality of emergency nursing.

The first edition of the Emergency Nurse Specialist Standards was developed to provide insight into and some broad practice guidelines for emergency nursing. The framework and research for these standards was undertaken by the standards sub-committee of the Australian Association of Emergency Nurses (AAEN), with input from many expert emergency nurses. The committee's initial efforts are contained within this document, which was transferred to the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia (CENA) in 2003 to continue with standards work and foster continued excellence in this area.

Emergency nursing is a unique and specialised area of practice functioning within a distinct health delivery environment. The Australian emergency care population comprises people from all age groups, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Emergency care facilities accept and manage the full spectrum of physical, psychological and social health problems within this broad community. Emergency presentations are episodic and unscheduled. Management ranges from minimal intervention to life saving, advanced life support.

Providing competent, quality emergency nursing care requires specialised knowledge, skills and aptitude. Through clinical experience, postgraduate emergency education programs and research utilisation, emergency nurses acquire a highly developed and uniquely comprehensive generalised knowledge and a diverse range of skills specific to delivering timely, competent emergency care.

Australian intergovernmental healthcare agreements outline a commitment to timely, equitable access to emergency care. This care is provided across metropolitan, rural and remote locations throughout Australia, including out-of-hospital and in-hospital contexts. Resource availability influences the level of care provided in these different locations, creating broad diversity in service capability. Emergency nurses are integral to the emergency service capability, providing timely and equitable health care across all Australian emergency contexts/environments.

Distinct elements of emergency nursing work include:

- Triage assessment and prioritisation that incorporates rapid, accurate decision-making under conditions where patient volumes and presentation acuity is variable and unpredictable
- Symptom-based versus disease-based assessment as the basis for developing differential diagnoses and ongoing care/treatment pathways

- Knowledge, skills and competencies to instigate and maintain the emergency management of unstable/undiagnosed patient presentations within an environment of constant movement and competing pressures
- Ability to change pace and approach in order to accommodate the specific physical and psychosocial dynamics of each patient presentation
- Emergency and first aid management of minor injuries
- Vigilant nursing surveillance of undiagnosed and unstable patients for signs of physiological/psychological deterioration, to ensure timely therapeutic intervention and enhance optimal patient outcomes
- Coordinated, cooperative and multidisciplinary emergency teamwork
- Trauma team preparedness and response
- Disaster and major incident preparedness and response
- Coordinating the efficient and seamless organisational flow of patients from presentation to transfer/departure from the emergency department
- Management and coordination of multiple diverse discharge and referral pathways for the emergency patient
- Participation in, and development of emergency based research
- Contribute to the body of emergency nursing knowledge that informs evidence-based practice
- Utilisation of emergency-based and evidence-based clinical tools that guide best practice decision-making in emergency nursing
- Evaluation of operational performance against specific emergency key performance indicators in order to improve emergency health care delivery
- Utilisation of technology such as online access information, telemedicine resources, integrated electronic medical records and the competent use of monitoring, diagnostic and life sustaining equipment.

The intention of this document is to reflect the practice standards for emergency nursing across Australasia and to provide the basis for discussion and debate within the emergency nursing profession. These practice standards will provide the foundation for further practice development and research in emergency nursing, and lead the way to improved benchmarking and best practice in emergency care.

It is envisaged that these standards will be an adjunct to the generic professional practice standards provided by the professional health regulatory authority e.g. the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority (AHPRA), which lay the foundation for generalist nursing practice.

1.0 DOMAIN: CLINICAL EXPERTISE

1.1 Performance Standard: Provides a concise and timely assessment of the undiagnosed patient.

Performance Criteria

a. Simultaneously collects and interprets clinical information and presenting problem
b. Identifies clinically relevant presenting symptoms and clinical history to inform assessment and differential diagnosis
c. Assesses and allocates the clinical urgency of all patients presenting to the emergency department, based on the interpretation of presenting symptoms, clinical findings and relevant medical history to inform the provision of emergency care
d. Identifies deviation from the expected clinical course
e. Identifies potential for deterioration
f. Conducts ongoing timely and appropriate reassessment of patient.

1.2 Performance Standard: Anticipates and instigates appropriate treatment and management strategies for multiple undifferentiated patients within a dynamic environment.

Performance Criteria

a. Prioritises the delivery of care for multiple patients in accordance with their clinical urgency
b. Interprets assessment findings to inform treatment and management priorities
c. Prioritises nursing interventions according to presenting patient symptoms and needs
d. Initiates appropriate, timely nursing interventions and coordinates appropriate team response based on presenting history and clinical urgency
e. Provides clinical support and expertise to interdisciplinary colleagues as necessary
f. Facilitates patient management and flow through the emergency department to ensure undifferentiated patients are cared for in an appropriately equipped clinical area.

1.3 Performance Standard: Evaluates patient progress against predicted outcomes.

Performance Criteria

a. Utilises theoretical and practical knowledge (e.g. pathophysiology, mechanism of injury, pharmacotherapeutics) to guide patient evaluation
b. Assesses risk and responds accordingly to optimise patient safety
c. Continues evaluation of patient responses to the effectiveness of interventions in accordance with evidence-based clinical pathways/guidelines
d. Collaborates with other health professionals to identify appropriate evaluation criteria to measure patient progress.

1.4 Performance Standard: Demonstrates the ability to coordinate the admission and/or discharge of patients with a variety of clinical needs.

Performance Criteria

a. Anticipates discharge/admission and works collaboratively to ensure efficient patient management while maintaining continuity of patient care
b. Provides referrals to health and social services appropriate to the patient's needs
c. Ensures safe transfer of patients to appropriate services
d. Provides appropriate discharge education and treatment information and encourages appropriate follow up
e. Provides a timely, comprehensive and appropriate handover of patients to continuing health care teams
f. Transfers all patient data necessary for continuity of care.

1.5 Performance Standard: Demonstrates the ability to provide patient and family-centred care.

Performance Criteria

a. Acts as a patient advocate
b. Collaborates with the patient, where possible to establish an agreed treatment pathway
c. Incorporates assessment of the social dynamics of family into care of the patient
d. Supports family presence during the patient's journey in the emergency department, including in resuscitation
e. Interactions with the patient are respectful of the individuals health choices
f. Recognises the role of the family/support people in patient care and involves them throughout the patients' assessment, management and discharge planning
g. Demonstrates sensitivity to the cultural and spiritual needs of patients and their families.

2.0 DOMAIN: COMMUNICATION

2.1 Performance Standard: Provides effective communication with all members of the health care teams and external agencies.

Performance Criteria

a. Consults with colleagues to plan, deliver and evaluate care
b. Communication is clear, concise, accurate, timely and delivered in a professional manner
c. Communicates patient information to ensure the continuity of care
d. Recognises and accounts for the challenges that impact on effective communication
e. Selects appropriate modes of communication and uses feedback to ensure the effective transfer of information.

2.2 Performance Standard: Communicates effectively with patient, family and support people.

Performance Criteria

a. Uses a variety of communication strategies to establish rapport with patients, families and support people, such as active listening, paraphrasing and non-judgemental language
b. Ensures communication approaches with patients/family/support people are individualised, and considers factors such as cognitive development level, education level, culture and ethnicity
c. Provides referrals and educational materials as appropriate
d. Engages interpreter services and utilises available technologies to maximise communication and promote patient independence and autonomy
e. Maintains patient privacy and confidentiality.

3.0 DOMAIN: TEAMWORK

3.1 Performance Standard: Performs effectively as a team member.

Performance Criteria

a. Is aware of the expectations and is accountable for one's own role within the team
b. Displays commitment to the common purpose and team goal/s
c. Interacts with multidisciplinary team members in a manner that promotes positive attitude, trust and respect for team diversity and inclusivity
d. Has knowledge of the individual team member's roles and how they contribute to the team based approach
e. Contributes to team activities within own scope of practice
f. Utilises knowledge of multidisciplinary / organisational hierarchy to deliver team outcome
g. Develops and maintains specialist skills and knowledge to enable effectiveness in emergencies or crisis situations
h. Recognises and responds effectively to emergency situations
i. Establishes cohesive working relationships to positively influence patient outcomes
j. Demonstrates and fosters an understanding of organisational processes that support care delivery
k. Appropriately initiates referrals to multidisciplinary team members or service providers outside the emergency department.

3.2 Performance Standard: Effectively leads a team to provide safe, quality patient care.

Performance Criteria

a. Defines team goals / priorities and communicates them to the team
b. Delegates roles and responsibilities for care to team members according to their competence and scope of practice
c. Recognises performance limitations within the team and provides timely support and direction as appropriate
d. Interacts with multidisciplinary team members in a manner that promotes a positive attitude, trust and respect for team diversity
e. Recognises when team or organisational function is impeded and implements appropriate solutions
f. Provides feedback that acknowledges individual performance, encourages staff development and fosters team cohesion
g. Recognises and values the contribution, opinion and ideas of each team member

h. Initiates debriefing as determined by the event or as requested by team
i. Identifies and promotes opportunities for the professional development of individuals within the team
j. Maintains self-control and professionalism in stressful situations.

3.3 Performance Standard: Appropriately manages critical incidents and stressful situations.

Performance Criteria

a. Initiates grief support and crisis intervention when appropriate
b. Supports staff caring for patients with challenging family and/or personal needs
c. Identifies and defuses potential conflict and facilitates conflict management
d. Demonstrates effective negotiation skills
e. Facilitates the initiation of debriefing as requested by peers or as determined by the event
f. Recognises the potential for cumulative stress and its impact on staff health, well-being and work performance
g. Works alongside colleagues to build emotional intelligence within the team, to develop colleagues' awareness of the importance of self-care and resilience in protecting self to care for others
h. Uses positive coping strategies to manage critical incidents and workplace stress.

4.0 DOMAIN: RESOURCES and ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Performance Standard: Practices to promote and maintain patient and staff safety.

Performance Criteria

a. Practices in accordance with organisational and national standards that are designed to guide and promote patient, visitor and staff safety
b. Supports and enacts relevant hospital policies/protocols and identifies gaps in the promotion of patient and staff safety
c. Identifies and reports all actual/potential risks to patient, staff and visitor safety
d. Initiates, promotes and evaluates strategies to eliminate or minimise identified actual/potential risks to safety
e. Prepares and transfers patients safely in intra-hospital and inter-facility settings
f. Proactively manages patient flow to minimise the impact of access block and to optimise patient safety.

4.2 Performance Standard: Effectively anticipates and provides appropriate human resources to promote optimal patient care.

Performance Criteria

a. Seeks assistance when patient needs surpass individual capacity or scope of practice
b. Recognises imbalances in workload and skill mix
c. Proactively allocates staff to provide optimal patient care in a dynamic environment
d. Evaluates strategies to address imbalances in workloads and staff skill-mix.

4.3 Performance Standard: Utilises and manages material resources effectively and responsibly to promote optimal patient care.

Performance Criteria

a. Demonstrates both a comprehensive working knowledge of all equipment and the ability to use the equipment appropriately
b. Checks and maintains equipment according to hospital/manufacturers recommendation to ensure a state of readiness for use
c. Manages faulty or malfunctioning equipment appropriately
d. Prepares and maintains work environment to ensure adequate material resources are available to support safe and efficient patient care
e. Manages space within the emergency setting to achieve efficiency and optimise patient flow
f. Utilises materials cost-efficiently
g. Contributes to the evaluation of the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of clinical products and equipment.

4.4 Performance Standard: Demonstrates preparedness and response for major incidents and disasters.

Performance Criteria

a. Demonstrates working knowledge of the organisation's emergency/disaster management plans
b. Demonstrates awareness of equipment used in major incidents and disasters and its location
c. Maintains emergency-related skills in accordance with legislation, policy and procedures
d. Anticipates, prepares and manages internal/external incidents and disasters, within the scope of practice and within the organisation's capacity.

5.0 DOMAIN: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Performance Standard: Maintains own professional development.

Performance Criteria

a. Identifies professional strengths, weaknesses and knowledge/ skill deficits to support the development of learning objectives and professional goals
b. Delivers emergency care within individual scope of practice and seeks support or guidance where appropriate
c. Participates in professional development activities to meet identified learning and professional goals
d. Actively seeks and critically reflects on feedback from colleagues about own nursing practice
e. Maintains a Professional Portfolio including documented learning and performance goals
f. Holds or is working towards a post graduate qualification in emergency nursing
g. Engages in and contributes to the evidence-base of emergency care.

5.2 Performance Standard: Contributes to the professional development of colleagues.

Performance Criteria

a. Role models the professional coordination and delivery of emergency care
b. Provides constructive feedback and encouragement to support the professional development of colleagues
c. Contributes to the orientation, preceptorship and mentoring of colleagues
d. Provides and supports formal and informal learning opportunities for colleagues.

5.3 Performance Standard: Promotes the specialty of emergency nursing.

Performance Criteria

a. Maintains membership of relevant professional organisations and industry groups
b. Participates and contributes to activities or events that profile emergency nursing
c. Participates in and supports research that will promote and enhance emergency nursing
d. Promotes and practices according to CENA practice standards.

6.0 DOMAIN: LEADERSHIP

6.1 Performance Standard: Demonstrates leadership that enables positive role modelling for nursing and other health professionals.

Performance Criteria

a. Demonstrates values that underpin caring nursing practice
b. Possesses a level of clinical knowledge and skill that demonstrates expertise and credibility in emergency nursing practice
c. Utilises effective interpersonal skills to engage, inspire, motivate and empower colleagues
d. Demonstrates effective and inclusive decision making skills related to clinical and system issues
e. Generates ideas and supports innovation within the domain of emergency nursing
f. Guides change through effective communication, education and staff support mechanisms
g. Sets direction as a patient advocate within the interdisciplinary healthcare team
h. Develops personal qualities such as self-awareness, self-reflection, self-management, professionalism and self-development.

6.2 Performance Standard: Advocates for and provides consultancy in emergency nursing.

Performance Criteria

a. Recognises and articulates contemporary issues influencing emergency health care
b. Participates as an emergency care representative on hospital committees and in relevant professional forums
c. Evaluates available evidence to identify opportunities for change
d. Applies specialist knowledge and evidence to make decisions and evaluate impact of change / outcomes

6.3 Performance Standard: Able to safely lead a team in caring for the at-risk patient.

Performance Criteria

a. Utilises experience and knowledge to ensure all appropriate care is given
b. Advocates for patients through proactive consultation with multidisciplinary team members
c. Seeks advice from senior colleagues when the need arises to protect the at-risk patient
d. Able to role model behaviours that support safe practice
e. Able to maintain collegial respect within the team through this interaction.

7.0 DOMAIN: LEGAL

7.1 Performance Standard: Complies with prevailing legislation and standards of best practice.

Performance Criteria

a. Demonstrates a thorough working knowledge of relevant Commonwealth and State legislation
b. Works at all times in accordance with the standards for Registered Nurses
c. Demonstrates a thorough working knowledge of department and organisational policies and procedures
d. Takes responsibility for own clinical decisions and undertakes clinical practice within scope of practice
e. Practice reflects an understanding of duty of care
f. Practice reflects an understanding of the requirements for delegation and supervision of practice
g. Identifies breaches of legislation and standards of practice, and takes appropriate action.

8.0 DOMAIN: PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

8.1 Performance Standard: Functions within an ethical framework.

Performance Criteria

a. Practices in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Nurses and other relevant professional standards that inform the fundamental rights and behaviour of nursing professionals toward all providers and recipients of nursing care
b. Recognises and respects diversity and the influence of culture on emergency nursing and clinical decision-making
c. Values the inherent worth and dignity of every individual
d. Advocates for respectful treatment of all individuals
e. Respects the individual's right of choice and strives to ensure their choices are understood and promoted
f. Protects the confidentiality of patient information and practice within the laws governing privacy and confidentiality of personal health information
g. Provides nursing care without prejudice or partiality
h. Recognises and critically reflects on the evolving nature of ethical issues impacting emergency nursing practice within the profession's ethical framework.

9.0 DOMAIN: RESEARCH and QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

9.1 Performance Standard: Demonstrates support for quality improvement within the emergency care environment.

Performance Criteria

a. Critiques practice to seek opportunities for continuous improvement
b. Plans, initiates and/or participates in measures to improve the quality of care
c. Appraises and incorporates evidence to inform quality activities
d. Evaluates outcomes of quality improvement activities
e. Determine the appropriateness of applying findings to practice
f. Disseminates results of practice improvement outcomes at local forums, conference presentations and publications
g. Promotes a culture of quality improvement within the emergency care environment.

9.2 Performance Standard: Utilises and supports the development of research within the emergency care environment.

Performance Criteria

a. Practices in accordance with best practice guidelines
b. Seeks out and critically evaluates research findings relevant to emergency practice
c. Evaluates the impact of integrating evidence into practice
d. Identifies and addresses factors that hinder the adoption of evidence based practice
e. Supports and contributes to emergency research in order to inform theory and practice development
f. Fosters teamwork and collaboratively engages professionals from within emergency and other disciplines to identify and address evidence gaps
g. Encourages research confidence through research interest groups, journal clubs or support from clinical educators and proactive management teams
h. Disseminates results of research findings at local forums, conference presentations and publications
i. Promotes a culture of research and evidence based practice within the emergency care environment.

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