

Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest - frequently asked questions

1. What is a Secretary approval?

Some regulations within the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2006 allow for the Secretary of the department to approve details that are not contained within the regulations. In relation to nurses and registered midwives, a Secretary approval is a written approval granted in accordance with regulation 5(3) and 5(4) of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2006. The regulations can be accessed using the following link:

http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_reg/dpacsr2006531/

2. What does the *Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest* do?

The *Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest* allows registered nurses and registered midwives to possess and administer the Schedule 4 poisons, adrenaline and amiodarone, for advanced life support (in the event of a cardiac arrest), under specific circumstances.

3. To whom does the *Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest* apply?

The *Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest* applies to a nurse¹ or midwife² who is registered by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and is employed (engaged or contracted) at a health service organisation³ in Victoria.

Note: Enrolled nurses (in Division 2 of the registered of nurses) are excluded from this approval.

4. What are the specific circumstances under which the *Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest* is granted?

The approval is granted under the following circumstances:

- The registered nurse or midwife is providing advanced life support in the event of a cardiac arrest.

¹ A registered nurse in Division 1 of the register of nurses established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria) Act 2009*

² A midwife on the register of midwives established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria) Act 2009*

³ A separately constituted health service that is responsible for the clinical governance, administration and financial management of a service unit(s) providing health care. A service unit involves a grouping of clinicians and others working in a systematic way to deliver health care to patients and can be in any location or setting, including pharmacies, clinics, outpatient facilities, hospitals, patient's homes, community settings, practices and clinicians' rooms (National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards 2012).

- The registered nurse or midwife has satisfactorily completed a course that conforms to the Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines and is either:
 - delivered by the Australian Resuscitation Council
 - credentialed by a relevant professional group or college and delivered by a registered training organisation
 - delivered by a higher education provider as part of a postgraduate qualification
 - delivered by health service staff who have basic life support, advanced life support and adult learning qualifications.
- The registered nurse or midwife administers the adrenaline and amiodarone in accordance with the current Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines (ARC) for cardiac arrest, in particular, the ARC Basic Life Support, ARC Adult Cardiorespiratory Arrest and ARC Paediatric Cardiorespiratory Arrest flow charts.
- The registered nurse or midwife possesses and administers only those Schedule 4 poisons (adrenaline and amiodarone) obtained from the Victorian health service organisation at which he/she is employed (including being engaged or contracted).
- The registered nurse or midwife has been assessed, through annual refresher training, to be competent to administer the Schedule 4 poisons for the purpose of providing advanced life support and keeps a record of that assessment.
- The refresher training must conform to the Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines and be either:
 - delivered by the Australian Resuscitation Council
 - credentialed by a relevant professional group or college and delivered by a registered training organisation
 - delivered by a higher education provider as part of a postgraduate qualification
 - delivered by health service staff who have basic life support, advanced life support and adult learning qualifications.

5. Are all registered nurses and midwives in Victoria able to possess and administer adrenaline and amiodarone for advanced life support in the event of a cardiac arrest?

No, the Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest only applies to a registered nurse or registered midwife who is employed (engaged or contracted) at a health service organisation in Victoria (refer to question 3 above).

Note: Enrolled nurses (in Division 2 of the register of nurses) are excluded from this approval.

6. Is it safe for a registered nurse or midwife to administer adrenaline and amiodarone in the event of a cardiac arrest?

Yes, appropriately educated and trained registered nurses and midwives are competent health professionals who are able to safely administer medicines during advanced life support, in line with Australian Resuscitation Council guidelines and under the specific circumstances outlined in question 4 above.

All registered nurses and midwives must meet the continuing professional development registration standard mandated by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. In addition, scope of practice statements are in place to ensure nurses and midwives deliver safe and competent care in a timely manner.

7. What is an employer required to do to ensure it is safe for a registered nurse or midwife to administer adrenaline and amiodarone in the event of a person presenting in the state of a cardiac arrest?

To help further ensure safe work practices in the practice setting, the employer (health service organisation) is responsible for having appropriate organisational policies and procedures in place, that align with the secretary approval and Australian Resuscitation Council guidelines. The policies and procedures must include requirements for the casual workforce. The employer is also responsible for ensuring relevant staff members have access to appropriate training and skills maintenance opportunities.

8. How does a registered nurse or midwife administer adrenaline and amiodarone in the event of a person presenting in the state of a cardiac arrest at the health service organisation at which they are employed?

The registered nurse or midwife will administer adrenaline and amiodarone in accordance with the current Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines for cardiac arrest, in particular, the ARC Basic Life Support, ARC Adult Cardiorespiratory Arrest and ARC Paediatric Cardiorespiratory Arrest flow charts. The relevant guidelines can be accessed at:

<http://resus.org.au/guidelines/>

Further, the registered nurse or midwife must also adhere to appropriate policies and procedures developed by their employing organisation.

9. How is the administering of adrenaline and amiodarone by registered nurses or midwives in the event of a cardiac arrest regulated in Victoria?

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia has responsibility for the regulation and registration of nurses and midwives in Australia and has ownership of the national competency standards for registered nurses and midwives. The primary role of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia is to protect the public and set standards and policies that all registered nurses and midwives must meet. As with all health professionals, registered

nurses and midwives have a professional responsibility to comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements, and to uphold the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's codes of professional conduct. Relevant standards and codes can be found at:

<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au>

10. Which medicines are registered nurses and midwives able to possess and administer when providing advanced life support to a person presenting in a state of a cardiac arrest, in Victoria?

Appropriately trained registered nurses or midwives are able to possess and administer the following Schedule 4 poisons when providing advanced life support in the event of a cardiac arrest:

- adrenaline
- amiodarone.

The dosage administered must be in accordance with the Australian Resuscitation Council flowcharts that can be found at:

<http://resus.org.au/guidelines/flowcharts-3/>

11. How can you identify which registered nurses or midwives are authorised to possess and administer adrenaline and amiodarone in the event of a person presenting in a state of cardiac arrest in Victoria?

Health service organisations must have an embedded process that allows all staff to recognise various training competencies and qualifications, thereby enabling them to provide expert care. The health service organisation should maintain a list of appropriately trained staff and this list needs to be readily accessible to all staff on all shifts.

12. What training does a nurse or midwife have to complete to be able to administer adrenaline and amiodarone in the event of a person presenting in a state of cardiac arrest?

The nurse or midwife is required to satisfactorily complete a course that conforms to the Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines and is either:

- delivered by the Australian Resuscitation Council;
- credentialed by a relevant professional group or college and delivered by a registered training organisation;
- delivered by a higher education provider as part of a postgraduate qualification; or
- delivered by health service staff who have Basic Life Support, Advanced Life Support and adult learning qualifications.

13. Does the nurse or midwife need to undertake refresher courses; if so, how often?

If you are a registered nurse or midwife who has satisfactorily completed a course as outlined above, you will need to undertake annual refresher training and be assessed to still be competent to administer adrenaline and amiodarone for the purpose of providing Advanced Life Support in the event of a cardiac arrest. You need to keep a record of your assessment of competence. As with the initial training, the refresher training will need to conform to the Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines and be delivered under the same conditions as the initial training.

14. To who are registered nurses and midwives able to administer adrenaline and amiodarone?

Registered nurses and midwives are able to administer adrenaline and amiodarone for Advanced Life Support to a person presenting in a state of cardiac arrest while at the health service organisation at which the nurse/midwife is employed (engaged or contracted) (see question 4 for more information).

15. How does the *Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest* benefit Victorians?

In Victoria, many small rural health services, community health services and satellite health services are dependent on medical officers or Ambulance Victoria to attend to patients who present at the service for urgent care. In these health service organisations a medical officer may not be on site and may not be able to be contacted when a patient arrives or is already in the care of the service. Also, it may take some time for a medical officer to attend the health service in an emergency situation. In some rural communities there are no general practitioners.

In circumstances such as those highlighted above, and in the event of a person presenting in a state of cardiac arrest, it is vital that a registered nurse or midwife (appropriately educated and skilled in both Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support) be able to manage the patient in cardiac arrest without a medical order, while awaiting attendance of a medical officer or Ambulance Victoria. An appropriate and timely response can be undertaken in the course of resuscitation. This response will include basic life support measures as well as safe administration of lifesaving medications (adrenaline and amiodarone), as required, in accordance with advanced life support guidelines.

16. Are there any circumstances under which a registered nurse or midwife should not administer adrenaline and amiodarone in the event of a person presenting in a state of cardiac arrest at a health service organisation in Victoria?

As previously stated, adrenaline and amiodarone can only be administered in the event of a person presenting in a state of cardiac arrest. There are specific circumstances/conditions that need to be met for a registered nurse or midwife to administer adrenaline and amiodarone, in the event of a cardiac arrest at the health service organisation at which they are employed. These specific circumstances are set out under question 4. If these

circumstances are not met, the registered nurse or midwife should not administer adrenaline or amiodarone in the event of a cardiac arrest at their place of employment.

Note: End-of-life considerations must be addressed in the employing organisation's policies and procedures. The protocols set by the organisation around medical intervention and resuscitation should always be adhered to and given precedence.

17. I am an agency registered nurse or midwife. Does the Secretary approval apply to me?

You will need to discuss this with your employer (health service organisation) who will have policies and procedures in place to address this circumstance (refer to question 7).

18. I am an enrolled nurse working in a low residential care aged care facility without a registered nurse present - what should I do?

Enrolled nurses (in Division 2 of the register of nurses) are excluded from this approval. In the event of person going into cardiac arrest in your place of employment when there is no medical officer or appropriately educated and trained registered nurse present, you are unable to meet the requirements for the Secretary Approval Cardiac Arrest and therefore cannot administer adrenaline or amiodarone.

19. What if I have further questions?

For further information about the Secretarial Approval Cardiac Arrest, email Nursing and Midwifery Workforce, Department of Health and Human Services at:

nmw@health.vic.gov.au