



Australian Divisions of **General Practice**

Nursing in General Practice – Position Statement

Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) supports the role of nurses in the general practice setting.

It is the view of our organisation that the employment of nurses in general practice will:

1. Increase consumer access to primary care services.
2. Enhance the range of services available to people attending general practice.
3. Provide collegiate support and assistance to general practitioners.
4. Enhance the management of people with chronic conditions.
5. Support, influence and manage change in general practice.
6. Promote safety and quality programs and practices.
7. Encourage a team approach to care.
8. Offer an attractive alternative career path for nurses.

General practice is an important and cost effective setting in which quality health services are delivered to the population. In Australia however, changing patient demography, increased emphasis on proactive care, workforce issues, rising health expenditure, and increased patient expectations mean that the way such care is organised requires review. Central to this is the development of general practice teams in which general practitioners, nurses and other health professionals provide a comprehensive range of primary health care services.

It is the position of ADGP that:

1. Every general practice in Australia should be supported and encouraged to employ or have access to a general practice nurse.
2. All general practice nurses must be credentialed either as a registered nurse or an enrolled nurse and maintain current registration with the nurse regulating authority in the State/Territory in which they work.
3. Enrolled nurses who work in general practice must have appropriate supervisory arrangements in place and work within their scope of practice and experience.
4. General practice nurses must have the qualifications and skills to practice competently in the areas of practice that they undertake. ADGP supports the development of a National Competency Standards for registered and enrolled nurses employed in general practice.
5. MBS items for services provided by a nurse in general practice should be expanded to encourage an autonomous advanced role for the nurse working under the direction of a general practitioner. This should include such things as:

- a. monitoring and clinical management (eg patient assessment prior to seeing the GP; follow up monitoring after GP review including blood glucose, blood pressure and medication administration; diagnostic testing; and oxygen/nebuliser therapy).
- b. health screening and health promotion services (eg women's health, infant health, health education, community development programs).
- c. input into chronic disease programs (eg diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and mental health, education and support for self-management programs).
- d. home visits (eg triage, follow up monitoring after GP review, medication administration, wound care).

Recent government initiatives in Australia are supporting general practice to deliver health care through a variety of means and personnel. These initiatives have included expanding the roles of nurses in general practice. The potential of promoting and expanding a role for nurses in general practice has grown with the focus on improved chronic disease management, health education and disease prevention programs.

In order to build on these gains ADGP recommends that:

- Opportunities are provided for nurses in general practice from beginning practitioner through to advanced levels of practice.
 - The Australian Government continue to support the role of divisions of general practice in the provision of mentoring, education and support programs for general practice nurses.
 - Educational opportunities to support and enhance the roles of general practice nurses are available through formal and non-formal programs that support flexible learning needs and ease of access.
 - Opportunities are encouraged for undergraduate and post graduate nursing students to undertake a clinical placement in the general practice setting.
 - Research is undertaken on best practice models for general practice teams in Australia, and on the development of outcome measures for the roles of general practice nurses.
 - The peak general practice and nursing organisations continue to work collaboratively in developing and advancing the standards that direct and support nursing practice in the general practice setting.
 - General practice and nursing representative and professional bodies, and training organisations promote the potential of general practice nursing and include up to date information on nursing services in the information made available to members.
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