POSITION STATEMENT – NURSE ENDOSCOPIST

March 2015

Definition
A Nurse Endoscopist is a Registered Nurse undertaking diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy, who is trained and deemed competent in gastrointestinal endoscopy to the nationally accepted standards expected of a medical endoscopist. The Nurse Endoscopist role is an advanced practice role functioning within a defined scope of practice.

Background
There is an increasing demand for gastrointestinal endoscopy procedures nationally, which in many areas exceeds capacity for service provision. Demand for endoscopic and specialist related services continue to rise with additional factors of an increasingly ageing demographic and the impact of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program producing additional surveillance requirements. Gastrointestinal endoscopy is both a diagnostic and therapeutic procedure. Histological sampling and removal of polyps combines to reduce disease impact through earlier diagnosis and treatment. Timely endoscopic procedures have shown a reduction in service demand for more intensive treatment, such as cancer treatments for more advanced disease.

In response to a need for endoscopists, gastrointestinal endoscopy is being performed by nurses in other developed countries, with education and training to practice within this specialist field. In Australia, gastroenterology nursing has developed expanded nursing roles to fill a clinical need for services which include the management of inflammatory bowel disease and liver disease. In addition since 1999, nurse endoscopists have been performing flexible sigmoidoscopy and upper gastrointestinal endoscopy and since 2012, colonoscopy.

Position
The Gastroenterological Nurses College of Australia (GENCA) maintains that registered nurses, educated and trained in the techniques of flexible endoscopy, may assume the responsibility of performing flexible endoscopy in an acute hospital setting, within a collaborative multidisciplinary team environment.

Patient safety is paramount and patients have the right to be treated by staff that are appropriately trained and are competent to carry out procedures as indicated (EU Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine 1997). Therefore, a framework for training must be established with recognised supervisors, mentors and assessors of practical skills. The education provided must be of a level and depth required to support clinical care during the procedure, as well as general patient management. Endoscopic skills training should be equivalent to that of gastroenterology medical trainees where a training regime exists (upper GI endoscopy, colonoscopy).
GENCA recognises that this is an advanced nursing practice role and therefore recommends that prior to participating in endoscopist training; the Registered Nurse has a minimum of five years post graduate nursing experience with three years in gastroenterology speciality, and a minimum of two years within gastrointestinal endoscopy. They should also be working towards an appropriate tertiary qualification, such as clinical Master’s degree with gastroenterology component or Nurse Practitioner Masters. The clinical training requirement is defined in the Health Workforce Australia Nurse Endoscopist training framework. It is recommended by GENCA that flexible endoscopy be incorporated into the nurse’s clinical practice role and the nurse be granted clinical privileges by the employing institution. The employing institution must define the nurse’s scope of practice in accordance with State legislation.

Disclaimer
GENCA assumes no responsibility for the practices or recommendations of any member or other practitioner, or for the policies and procedures of any practice setting. Nurses function within their professional registration as defined by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and within their scope of practice, and locally agreed policies and guidelines.

References


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**Bibliography**


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