Practice Standards for the Specialist Emergency Nurse
The College of Emergency Nursing Australasia is the peak professional body representing emergency nurses across Australasia.

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College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
PO Box 7345, Beaumaris
Victoria, 3193, Australia
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 standards have been developed by CENA to recognise, promote and protect the profession of emergency nursing and ensure that the profession continues to hold and maintain good standing and high esteem within the community that they serve. This 4th Edition of the Practice Standards for the Specialist Emergency Nurse reflect both the history of emergency nursing in Australia and contemporary delivery of emergency care.

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, graduate emergency nursing education 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 and 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 disposition 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
• Contribution to the body of knowledge that informs evidence-based emergency care provision
• 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 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 Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, Registered Nurses Standards for Practice;¹ which lay the foundation for generalist nursing practice.

Associate Professor Julia Morphet
Executive Director, College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
The National Board of the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia sincerely thank the members of the Professional Standards Committee who have contributed to this edition of the Practice Standards for the Specialist Emergency Nurse.

Wayne Varndell (Chair) MCENA
MN (Research) BSc (Hons) PGDip (AP) PGCE PGDipHE
Associate Executive Director, College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
Branch Director, NSW Branch, College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
Clinical Nurse Consultant, Prince of Wales Hospital Emergency Department
Honorary Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Technology Sydney

Sarah-Louise Laing (Co-chair) FCENA
BN, PGCert (Management and Leadership) GradCertClinNurs (Emergency)
Branch Director, WA Branch College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
Chair, Marketing and Communication Committee, College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
Nurse Unit Manager, Emergency, Royal Perth Hospital

Tom Beatty MCENA
BNg, BHlthSc CN GradCert GradDipNg CHIA
Quality and Safety Manager, Southern Adelaide Local Health Network

Dr Di Crellin FCENA
BN CertEmerg PGDip MN PhD
Branch Secretary, Victorian Branch, College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
Nurse practitioner, Royal Children's Hospital Emergency Department
Senior lecturer, Department of Nursing, The University of Melbourne
Research Fellow, Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Julie Finucane OAM RFD FACN FCENA
Nursing Director Medical, QEII Jubilee Hospital
Colonel Consultant CAG 3HSB

Hancy Issac MCENA
MScN PGDipHSc BScN
Clinical academic lecturer, University of Southern Queensland

Carrie Janerka MCENA
RN BN GradCert (Emerg) GradCertTerTeach MClinN (Emerg)
Lecturer, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine, Curtin University

Kristie McKenzie MCENA
MN GradCert (Emerg) GradCert (Health Service Mgt) GradDip (Edu) BNAppSci
Nurse Unit Manager Blue Mountains Hospital Emergency Department

Annabel Milonas MCENA
M.Ed MA (Terrorism) GradDip (Emerg. Mgt.) BA (Edu) GradDip Nursing GradCert (Emerg)
CONTENTS

Domain 1: Clinical Expertise .................................................................................................................. 8
Domain 2: Communication .................................................................................................................... 9
Domain 3: Teamwork ............................................................................................................................. 9
Domain 4: Resources and the Environment ......................................................................................... 10
Domain 5: Professional Development ................................................................................................ 11
Domain 6: Leadership ........................................................................................................................... 12
Domain 7: Lawful practice .................................................................................................................... 13
Domain 8: Professional Ethics ............................................................................................................. 13
Domain 9: Research and quality improvement .................................................................................... 14
References ............................................................................................................................................ 16
Domain 1: Clinical Expertise

The emergency nurse specialist is competent, and who, by providing quality care, promote positive outcomes to the populations they serve. The attributes of the emergency nurse specialist determines that clinical expertise includes evidenced based care, a holistic approach, and the ability to practice safely and effectively. Care performance expects that the individualised needs of the person are dynamic and followed to ensure care based on evidence, knowledge and technical expertise essential for a quality result.

1.1 Application of advanced assessment skills for the undiagnosed patient presenting for emergency care, which then enables analysis and synthesis of the presenting problem that will inform plan of care.

1.1.1 Utilises advanced assessment skills to identify actual and potential clinical problems of the patient requiring emergency care, including differential diagnosis.

1.1.2 Working within the Australasian Triage Scale Framework, assesses and allocates clinical urgency of patients presenting to the emergency department based on interpretation of all available subjective, objective and pre-hospital data to inform plan of emergency care and treatment of time critical conditions.

1.1.3 Identifies the need for reassessment of the patient providing this in a timely and appropriate manner.

1.1.4 Analyses assessment data to inform level of identified risk of clinical deterioration.

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

1.2.1 Interprets assessment findings to inform treatment and care management priorities.

1.2.2 Prioritises delivery of care for multiple patients in accordance with their clinical urgency, presentation and risk factors.

1.2.3 Initiates appropriate, safe and timely nursing management and coordinates appropriate multidisciplinary team response.

1.2.4 Is responsible for their actions and for the health team in meeting patient needs, being aware of the professional role in work activities, while providing expertise to interdisciplinary colleagues as necessary.

1.2.5 Facilitates patient management and flow through the emergency department to ensure patients are cared for in an appropriate clinical area.

1.2.6 Performs basic to advanced level nursing procedures within the scope of practice, related to emergency care, utilising evidence-based technique and appropriate resources.

1.3 Evaluates patient progress against predicated outcomes.

1.3.1 Utilises theoretical and practical knowledge to guide patient evaluation.

1.3.2 Assesses risk and responds accordingly to optimise patient safety and minimize impact of risk.

1.3.3 Provides ongoing evaluation and monitoring of patient responses to interventions in accordance with evidence-based practice.

1.3.4 Collaborates with other health professionals to identify appropriate evaluation criteria to measure patient progress.

1.3.5 Recognizes and responds to emergency situations.

1.3.6 Escalates care of patient in the presence of unexpected patient outcome to maintain the safety of the patient.

1.4 Demonstrates an understanding of the patient journey and clinical needs required across the emergency care journey and contributes to timely progress of the patient through this journey that minimises risk to patient and healthcare performance.

1.4.1 Anticipates discharge/admission requirements and works collaboratively.

1.4.2 To ensure efficient patient management while maintaining continuity of patient care.

1.4.3 Appropriately initiates referrals to multidisciplinary team members or service providers outside the Emergency department.

1.4.4 Ensures safe transfer of patients to appropriate services.
1.4.5 Provides appropriate discharge education to patient and significant others, including treatment information and required follow up.
1.4.6 Provides a timely, comprehensive and appropriate handover of patients to continuing health care team’s utilising a common clinical handover tool.
1.4.7 Transfers all patient data necessary for continuity of care.

1.5 Demonstrates patient and family centered care.
1.5.1 Acts as a patient advocate.
1.5.2 Collaborates with the patient and carer and care team to establish an agreed treatment pathway.
1.5.3 Incorporates assessment of the psychosocial dynamics of family into care of the patient.
1.5.4 Supports family presence during the patient’s journey in all streams of the emergency department.
1.5.5 Interactions with the patient are respectful of the individual’s health choices.
1.5.6 Recognises the role of the family, carer and care team leader in patient care, and involves them throughout the patients’ assessment, management and discharge planning.
1.5.7 Demonstrates sensitivity to the cultural and spiritual needs of patients and their families.
1.5.8 Utilises effective communication skills to maintain health literacy for all patients and their family.

Domain 2: Communication
The emergency nurse is at the forefront of patient care. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are essential elements of providing quality emergency nursing care. The effectiveness of communication between emergency nurses, the care team and patient, directly impacts on patient and staff safety.9

2.1 Provides effective communication with all members of the health care teams and external agencies.
2.1.1 Consults with colleagues to plan, deliver and evaluate care.

2.1.2 Communication is clear, concise, accurate and delivered in a timely professional manner.
2.1.3 Communicates patient information to ensure the continuity of care.
2.1.4 Recognises and accounts for the challenges that impact on effective communication.
2.1.5 Selects appropriate modes of communication and uses feedback to ensure the effective transfer of information.

2.2 Communicates effectively with patient, family and support people.
2.2.1 Uses a variety of communication strategies to establish rapport with patients, families and support people, such as active listening, paraphrasing and non-judgmental language.
2.2.2 Ensures communication approaches with patients/family/support people are individualised, and considers factors such as cognitive development level, education level, culture and ethnicity, health literacy.
2.2.3 Provides referrals and educational materials as appropriate.
2.2.4 Engages interpreter services and utilises available technologies to maximise communication and promote patient independence and autonomy.
2.2.5 Maintains patient privacy and confidentiality.
2.2.6 Be present and listen carefully, attentively and without judgement, to prevent your thoughts from distracting you, and allow you to absorb what is being said.
2.2.7 Cultivate empathy to allow you to understand a situation from someone else’s view.
2.2.8 Communication is made up of more than just the words we use. Our tone of voice, facial expression and body language all play a major role in understanding what is said.

Domain 3: Teamwork
The emergency nurse specialist performs efficiently as a team member though coordinated and efficient actions to achieve a common goal. The behavioural attributes of the emergency nurse specialist within the team displays a collaborative, consultative and social spirit.5,10
3.1 Performs effectively as a team member.

3.1.1 Is aware of the expectations and is accountable for one’s own role within the team.
3.1.2 Displays commitment to the common purpose and team goal(s).
3.1.3 Interacts with all members of the team in a manner that promotes positive attitude, trust and respect for team diversity and inclusivity.
3.1.4 Has knowledge of the individual team member’s roles and how they contribute to the team-based approach.
3.1.5 Contributes to team activities within own scope of practice.
3.1.6 Utilises organisational knowledge to deliver team outcome.
3.1.7 Develops and maintains specialist skills and knowledge to enable effectiveness in emergency or crisis situations.
3.1.8 Establishes cohesive working relationships to positively influence patient outcomes.
3.1.9 Demonstrates and fosters an understanding of organisational processes that support care delivery.

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

3.2.1 Defines team goals and communicates them to the team.
3.2.2 Practices effective crisis resource management strategies within and for the team.
3.2.3 Delegates roles and responsibilities for care to team members according to their competence and scope of practice.
3.2.4 Recognises performance limitations within the team and provides timely supervision, support and direction as appropriate.
3.2.5 Interacts with all team members that promotes a positive attitude, trust and respect for team diversity.
3.2.6 Recognises when team or organisational function is impeded and implements appropriate solutions.
3.2.7 Through supervision, provides feedback that acknowledges individual performance, encourages staff development and fosters team cohesion.
3.2.8 Recognises and values the contribution, opinion and ideas of each team member
3.2.9 Identifies and promotes opportunities for the professional development of individuals within the team.
3.2.10 Practices social and emotional intelligence to ensure self-control and professionalism

3.3 Appropriately manages critical incidents and stressful situations.

3.3.1 Initiates critical incident management strategies as determined by the event or as requested by the team.
3.3.2 Supports staff caring for patients with challenging family and/or personal needs.
3.3.3 Identifies and defuses potential conflict and facilitates conflict management.
3.3.4 Demonstrates effective negotiation skills.
3.3.5 Recognizes the importance of health and wellbeing and the potential for cumulative stress and its impact on staff health, wellbeing and work performance.
3.3.6 Works alongside colleagues to build emotional and social intelligence within the team to promote the importance of self-care and resilience.
3.3.7 Uses positive coping strategies to manage critical incidents and workplace stress.

Domain 4: Resources and the Environment

Individual and population wellbeing are inextricably linked with the health and safety of the environment. The environmental footprint of the healthcare industry is significant, consuming vast quantities of resources and producing considerable waste. Further, global climate change can affect the social and environmental determinants of health.

4.1 Practices to promote and maintain patient and staff safety.

4.1.1 Practices in accordance with organisational and national standards that are designed to
4.1.2 Supports and enacts relevant policies and identifies gaps in the promotion of patient and staff safety.

4.1.3 Identifies and reports all actual or potential risks to patient, staff and visitor safety.

4.1.4 Initiates, promotes and evaluates strategies to eliminate or minimise identified actual or potential risks to safety.

4.1.5 Prepares and transfers patients safely between health care settings.

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

4.2.1 Seeks assistance when patient needs surpass individual/team capacity or scope of practice.

4.2.2 Proactively allocates staff to provide optimal patient care in a dynamic environment.

4.2.3 Evaluates strategies to address imbalances in workloads and staff skill-mix.

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

4.3.1 Demonstrates both a comprehensive working knowledge of all equipment and the ability to use the equipment appropriately.

4.3.2 Checks and maintains equipment according to hospital/manufacturers recommendation to ensure a state of readiness for use.

4.3.3 Manages faulty or malfunctioning equipment appropriately.

4.3.4 Prepares and maintains work environment to ensure adequate material resources are available to support safe and efficient patient care.

4.3.5 Manages space within the emergency setting to achieve efficiency and optimise patient flow.

4.3.6 Utilises materials cost-efficiently

4.3.7 Contributes to the evaluation of the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of clinical products and equipment.

4.4 Reduces impact on the environment.

4.4.1 Advocates for healthy environments.

4.4.2 Advocates to ensure material resources used in the delivery of emergency healthcare are environmentally safe and sustainable.

4.4.3 Collaborates to eliminate superfluous packaging and acts minimises the use of non-recyclable material resources.

4.4.4 Promotes recycling wherever possible.

4.4.5 Ensures sustainable procurement strategies are followed in the purchasing of equipment and material resources.

4.5 Demonstrates preparedness and response for major incidents and disasters.

4.5.1 Demonstrates working knowledge of the organisation’s emergency/disaster management plans.

4.5.2 Demonstrates awareness of equipment used in major incidents and disasters and its location.

4.5.3 Maintains emergency-related skills in accordance with legislation, policy and procedures.

4.5.4 Anticipates, prepares and manages internal/external incidents and disasters, within the scope of practice and within the organisation’s capacity.

Domain 5: Professional Development

Emergency nursing is an ever-advancing specialty in an equally progressive and demanding clinical environment. As such, emergency nurse specialist will adopt an approach that continually improves and broadens their knowledge, expertise and competence, to ensure the delivery of safe, effective, evidence-based care.

5.1 Enhances own professional development.
5.1.1 Reflects on practice and identifies strengths, weaknesses and areas for knowledge and skill development.
5.1.2 Participates in professional development activities to meet identified learning and professional goals.
5.1.3 Maintains a portfolio of professional achievements, learning and development goals.
5.1.4 Uses affirmative and developmental feedback from colleagues to critically reflect on and enhance own practice.
5.1.5 Holds or is working towards a recognised post-graduate qualification in emergency nursing.

5.2 Facilitates the professional development of colleagues.
5.2.1 Is an exemplary role model in the delivery and coordination of emergency nursing care through positive and professional skills and behavioural attributes.
5.2.2 Is able to deliver feedback to colleagues to facilitate their professional development and professionalism in the workplace.
5.2.3 Acts as a resource person through trajectories of orientation, preceptorship models and mentoring of less experienced colleagues.
5.2.4 Facilitates a broad range of learning opportunities that cater for a dynamic range of individual learning styles and assist cognitive processes and skill attainment.

5.3 Promotes the specialty of emergency nursing.
5.3.1 Maintains membership of professional organisation(s) which align with emergency nursing.
5.3.2 Actively participates and contributes to activities and events that profile emergency nursing.

5.3.3 Engages and supports research activities to enhance and promote emergency nursing practice.
5.3.4 Promotes and practices according to CENA practice standards.

Domain 6: Leadership

Emergency nurse leaders deal with unprecedented demands and rapid changes in their workplace. Effective leadership skills are vital to the delivery of safe patient care, staff wellbeing and optimal functioning of the emergency department. Emergency nurse specialists require advanced levels of communication, mentoring strategies, leadership, management and clinical knowledge.

6.1 Demonstrates leadership that enables positive role modelling for nursing and other health professionals.
6.1.1 Demonstrates values that underpin caring emergency nursing practice
6.1.2 Possesses a level of clinical knowledge and skill that demonstrates expertise and credibility in emergency nursing practice.
6.1.3 Support future nurse leaders through effective mentoring and coaching to motivate and empower colleagues.
6.1.4 Demonstrates effective interpersonal skills, problem solving, conflict resolution and inclusive decision-making skills related to clinical and system issues.
6.1.5 Generates ideas and supports innovation within the domain of emergency nursing.
6.1.6 Enacting a vision, and guiding growth and change through motivating and inspiring constituent.
6.1.7 Guides change through effective communication, education and staff support mechanisms.
6.1.8 Sets direction as a patient advocate within the interdisciplinary healthcare team

6.1.9 Accepts responsibility for personal actions and possess qualities such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-reflection, self-management, professionalism and self-development.

6.2 Advocates for and provides consultancy in emergency nursing.

6.2.1 Recognises and articulates contemporary issues influencing emergency health care

6.2.2 Participates as an emergency care representative on hospital committees and in relevant Professional forums

6.2.3 Evaluates available evidence to identify opportunities for change

6.2.4 Applies specialist knowledge and evidence to make decisions, and evaluates outcomes

6.2.5 Development of skills that support the leading, designing and sustaining of projects.

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

6.3.1 Utilises clinical experience and knowledge to ensure all appropriate care is provided to patients

6.3.2 Lead and strengthen staff readiness to deal with crisis situations, disaster management and public health emergency.

6.3.3 Advocates for patients through proactive consultation with multidisciplinary team members.

6.3.4 Seeks advice from senior colleagues when the need arises to protect the at-risk patient.

6.3.5 Able to role model behaviours that support safe practice.

6.3.6 Able to maintain collegial respect within the team through this interaction.

Domain 7: Lawful practise

Emergency nurses are accountable for their decisions, actions, omissions and behaviours. They are expected to perform competently and without prejudice, and not engage in unlawful conduct.  


7.1.1 Demonstrates a thorough working knowledge of relevant Commonwealth and State legislation.

7.1.2 Works at all times in accordance with the standards for Registered Nurses.

7.1.3 Demonstrates a thorough working knowledge of department and organisational policies and procedures.

7.1.4 Takes responsibility for own clinical decisions and undertakes clinical practice within scope of practice.

7.1.5 Practice reflects an understanding of duty of care.

7.1.6 Practice reflects an understanding of the requirements for delegation and supervision of practice.

7.1.7 Identifies breaches of legislation and standards of practice and takes appropriate action.

Domain 8: Professional Ethics

A core feature of emergency nursing is the capacity to prioritise patients, often simultaneously, who require prompt assessment and management to avoid suffering, long-term disability, or death. As such, it is focused on the quality of life and care of individuals across the spectrum of health, an ethical activity in itself, requiring commitment to respect, promote, protect and uphold the fundamental rights of individuals who are both the recipients and providers of emergency nursing and health care.

8.1 Functions within an ethical framework.

8.1.1 Practices in accordance with the International Council for Nurses Code of Ethics and other relevant professional standards that inform the fundamental rights and behaviour of nursing professionals toward all providers and recipients of nursing care.
8.1.2 Recognises and respects diversity and the influence of culture on emergency nursing and clinical decision-making.

8.1.3 Values the inherent worth and dignity of every individual.

8.1.4 Advocates for respectful treatment of all individuals.

8.1.5 Respects the individual’s right of choice and strives to ensure their choices are understood and promoted.

8.1.6 Protects the confidentiality of patient information and practice within the laws governing privacy and confidentiality of personal health information.

8.1.7 Provides nursing care without prejudice or partiality.

8.1.8 Recognises and critically reflects on the evolving nature of ethical issues impacting emergency nursing practice within the profession’s ethical framework.

9.1.2 Utilises a patient centred or patient driven focus to drive improvements in healthcare, involves the patient in all aspects of patient design and patient.

9.1.3 Plans, initiates and/or participates in measures to improve the quality of care.

9.1.4 Appraises and incorporates evidence to inform quality activities.

9.1.5 Evaluates outcomes of quality improvement activities using continuous improvement methodology.

9.1.6 Disseminates results of practice improvement outcomes at local forums, conference presentations and publications.

9.1.7 Actively promotes a culture of quality improvement within the emergency care environment.

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

9.2.1 Practices in accordance with evidence-based practice guidelines.

9.2.2 Critically evaluates and translates relevant research findings to emergency practice.

9.2.3 Monitors impact and sustainability of integrated research implementation process.

9.2.4 Identifies and addresses factors that hinder the adoption of evidence-based practice with focus groups and staff meetings.

9.2.5 Constructively critiques health policies and guidelines to influence evidence-based practice within the organisation.

9.2.6 Initiate, support and contribute to emergency research in order to inform theory and practice development.

**Domain 9: Research and quality improvement**

Significance of research is paramount within emergency departments due to its evolving contemporary challenges staff encounter day to day. Research paves way and enhances exceptional quality improvement, which eventually translates to improved staff and patient experience.

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

9.1.1 Critiques practice to seek opportunities for continuous improvement. Example may include reviewing:

- Thematic review of incident reporting incidents within the emergency department
- Investigation of a serious clinical incident
- Comparing current practice to peers or other literature
9.2.7 Fosters teamwork and collaboratively engages to do research with interdisciplinary professionals to identify and address evidence gaps in the emergency department.

9.2.8 Promotes research culture through research interest groups, focus groups, journal clubs or support from clinical educators and proactive management teams.

9.2.9 Disseminates results of research findings at local forums, conference presentations and publications.
References


