



## **Position Statement**

### **Patient Handover – Emergency Department**

The College of Emergency Nurses of New Zealand believes that emergency nurses within New Zealand should utilise a standardised approach to communication for the handover of a patient's care between staff i.e. when the responsibility of the patient's care is transferred between healthcare team members. The transfer of care includes; at the change of shift, transfer between diagnostic areas, transfer to inpatient units or wards, or to other healthcare facilities. The aim of good handover practices is to maintain effective communication throughout the course of a patient's journey.

#### **Definition:**

A patient handover is the transfer of professional responsibility and accountability for some or all aspects of care for a patient or group of patients, to another person or professional group on a temporary or permanent basis.

The aim of any handover is to achieve the efficient communication of high quality clinical information at any time when the responsibility for patient care is transferred. Handover requires systemic, individual attention and needs education, support, and facilitation with sustained effort to ensure it maintains a position of importance throughout the patient's journey between the healthcare teams.

#### **Rationale:**

Incomplete or unclear communication regarding the responsibility and accountability for a patient's care may lead to serious breakdowns in the continuity of care, and increases the risk of potential harm to the patient.

The handover communication relates to the process of passing patient-specific information between healthcare team members.

CENNZ-NZNO advocates the following standards

- Organisations implement a standardised approach to handover communication between staff.
- Consistent use of a structured template for the handover process e.g. SBAR
- Identification of the points in the patient journey at which handover of responsibility and accountability occur.
- Provision of opportunities for the receiving healthcare member to ask questions and get clarification.
- Provision of a system to enable easy access to additional information if needed.
- Checklists may help in the management of common conditions.
- Handover should be accomplished in an effective, orderly and predictable manner.
- Each department should utilise standardised clinical handover procedures suitable to the specific working environments and demands, taking into account patient confidentiality.
- Handover should reflect the multidisciplinary needs of emergency department patients.

Registered Nurses and Enrolled Nurses are regulated by;

- The Nursing Council of New Zealand. The process of the handover of communication is demonstrated through the nursing council competencies framework.
- The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. Its purpose is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure the lifelong competence of health practitioners.
- The Health and Disability Commission Act 1994. The duties of health care providers as they relate to the measures necessary to enable healthcare consumers to communicate effectively with healthcare providers and health care providers work in a collaborative manner.

**References:**

<https://www.acem.org.au/Standards-Publications/Policies-Guidelines/Guidelines.aspx?search=clinical>

[http://www.who.int/patientsafety/events/media/h5\\_p4.jpg](http://www.who.int/patientsafety/events/media/h5_p4.jpg)

<http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Nurses/Scopes-of-practice/Registered-nurse>

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/health-practitioners-competence-assurance-act>

<http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code>