

**Exploration of a nursing role in emergency  
department waiting rooms**

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## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I, Kelli Innes, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Health at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEM	Australasian College of Emergency Medicine
ATS	Australasian Triage Scale
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme
CENA	College of Emergency Nursing Australasia
CIN	Clinical Initiative Nurse
DNW	Did not wait
ECG	Electrocardiograph
ED	Emergency Department
EN	Enrolled Nurse
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IV	Intravenous
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LOS	Length of Stay
LWBS	Left without being seen
MDRNSTAT	Physician [MD]-Nurse [RN] Supplementary Team
NEAT	National Emergency Access Target
NMBA	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
NUM	Nurse Unit Manager
NTS	National Triage Scale
RITZ	Rapid Intervention and Treatment Zone
RN	Registered Nurse
WR	Waiting room
WRN	Waiting Room Nurse

## ANTHOLOGY OF PUBLICATIONS

**Innes, K.,** Jackson, D., Plummer, V., Elliott, D. (2019). A profile of the waiting room nurse in emergency departments: An online survey of Australian nurses exploring implementation and perceptions. *International Emergency Nursing*. DOI: 10.1016/j.ienj.2018.10.003

**Innes, K.,** Elliott, D., Plummer, V., & Jackson, D. (2017). Emergency department waiting room nurses in practice: An observational study, *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 27(7-8), ppe1402-1411. DOI: 10.1111/jocn.14240

**Innes, K.,** Jackson, D., Plummer, V. & Elliott, D. (2017). Emergency department waiting room nurse role: a key informant perspective. *Australasian Emergency Nursing Journal* 20(1), 6-11. DOI: 10.1016/j.aenj.2016.12.002.

**Innes, K.,** Jackson, D., Plummer, V. & Elliott, D. (2015). Care of patients in emergency department waiting rooms – an integrative review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 71(12), p.2902-2714. DOI: 10.1111/jan.12719

## **LIST OF CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- 2018** Oral presentation – Waiting Room Nurse roles in the emergency department: Current practice and praxis content, Sigma Theta Tau International 29<sup>th</sup> International Nursing Research Congress, Melbourne.
- 2016** Oral presentation – The why and how of introducing a waiting room nurse role into the emergency department, 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference for Emergency Nurse, Alice Springs.
- 2016** Poster presentation – The introduction of an emergency department waiting room nurse role: findings from key informants, 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Conference on Emergency Nursing & Trauma Care, Sitges Spain.
- 2014** Poster presentation – Patient care in the emergency department waiting room: a literature review, National Nursing Forum 2014, Adelaide.



## **ABSTRACT**

The waiting room nurse role was introduced into emergency department waiting rooms in response to increased waiting times, poor patient outcomes and failure to meet key performance indicators. The aim of role was to decrease waiting times, reassess patients and improve communication. There is a paucity of literature relating to the role. The aim of the research was to explore nurses perception of the implementation of a nurse allocated to care for patients in emergency department waiting rooms.

An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was used. In Phase 1, data exploring factors contributing to the development of the role were collected from key informant (n=6) through semi-structured interviews. In Phase 2 waiting room nurses (n=8) from a major metropolitan and regional hospital in Victoria (Australia) were observed in clinical practice over 13 periods of observation. Phase 3 surveyed members of the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia, the peak professional body, on the implementation of the role across Australia and their perception of the role. There was a total of 197 survey responses.

The key findings of the research were that nurses perceived the role contributed to care quality and patient safety in the waiting room. Waiting Room Nurses developed therapeutic relationships to deliver holistic patient-centred care and facilitated the flow of patients out the waiting room. Variations in preparation, experience and supporting policy were found. A number of challenges including role confusion, funding issues and high exposure to occupational stressors were noted.

Integration of the results identified the characteristics and attributes of nurses performing the role, along with the organisational resources required. The activities of the WRN were found to be assessment, secondary triage interventions, communication and facilitating patient flow. Finally, expediting care, patient advocacy, therapeutic relationships, de-escalation, empowerment, improving care quality and safety and deliver of patient-centred care were identified as outcomes of the role.

A standardised approach, with considerations for local priorities and work practices, to the preparation, education and supporting policies is required. In addition, policy relating to high exposure of WRNs to occupational stressors is necessary. Further research into the role is essential, including exploring patient outcomes and experiences of the role.