

Victorian Advanced Practice Nurse Endoscopy Services

Questions & Answers

What is nurse endoscopy?

An advanced practice specialised nurse trained under the direct supervision of Gastroenterologists and Colorectal Surgeons to perform endoscopic examinations, such as that of the lower gastrointestinal tract.

Why is advanced practice in endoscopy nursing necessary?

By expanding the scope of work trained health professionals can safely undertake, we are creating a health workforce that can better respond to Australia's changing and increased demands for health care.

This growing demand for colonoscopy screening services in Victoria is driven by a range of factors including:

- increasing public expectations and awareness in relation to health and health services including the value of screening programs such as the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP)
- an aging population
- an increase in certain lifestyle conditions, such as obesity, which are associated with gastro-intestinal co-morbidities.¹

Data from the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria indicates that between 2000-01 and 2011-12 the number of public sector colonoscopies significantly increased by 36.5 per cent (from 15,794 to 21,557 colonoscopies respectively). It is foreseeable that demand will continue to steadily increase.

In terms of NBCSP related colonoscopies undertaken in the public sector, this equates to around 1,261 per annum. With the acceleration towards full implementation of the screening program by 2020, modelling by the Department of Health & Human Services Victoria indicates that statewide demand for public sector endoscopies will significantly increase by approximately 6,738 colonoscopies under a full roll-out scenario.

Part of the solution to respond to the growing demand for endoscopy services is interdisciplinary teams of health professionals (medical, nursing and allied health staff) working collaboratively to utilise skills to full capacity to provide safe, high-quality, patient-centred care.

What are the benefits of advanced practice nurse endoscopy?

Access to timely endoscopy services underpins delivery of cancer care and is necessary to support delivery of high-quality health care to the Victorian community.

The introduction of advanced practice nurse endoscopy enables medical staff to manage and treat more patients by delegating appropriate cases to highly qualified advanced practice nurses. This in turn allows better access to Gastroenterologists for complex and advanced endoscopic cases.

Advanced practice nurse endoscopy means real benefits to patients and public health services. This means providing greater access to services for suitable patients requiring follow up screening and review services and building workforce capacity in the form of extra nurses and additional lists, in addition to the current medical endoscopy lists.

¹ Department of Health 2010, *Endoscopy in Victoria's Public Health Services*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne

Is advanced practice nurse endoscopy being trialled in Victoria?

Yes. Under an Expanded Scope of Practice program, co-funded by Health Workforce Australia, the Victorian Department of Health & Human Services has been at the forefront of trialling an innovative model of Advanced Practice Endoscopy Nursing across four sites — Austin Health as the lead site, working in partnership with Alfred, Monash and Western Health Services. This project is part of a broader program that includes Logan Hospital in Queensland. Through the State Endoscopy Training Centre,

The program aims to demonstrate evidence-based, sustainable service models using advanced practice nurse endoscopists that help to reduce waiting times for endoscopic procedures and establish a national training pathway at the completion of the project scheduled for June 2014.

Austin Health is already trialling an Advanced Practice Endoscopy Nursing model based on the long-standing National Health Service (UK) Model. Appropriate training, supervision and delegation processes for a registered nurse to perform designated endoscopy procedures as part of an interdisciplinary Gastroenterology team, in an appropriate support setting is being pursued.

What training do advanced practice nurse endoscopists undertake in Victoria?

Patient safety remains paramount. Under the Expanded Scope of Practice program, highly qualified and experienced nurses within the endoscopy field undertake a minimum of 12 months of advanced skills training.

Specialist theoretical and practical modes of training are delivered under the direct supervision of Gastroenterologists and Colorectal Surgeons to ensure nurse endoscopists perform screening colonoscopies safely, accurately and effectively. As with medical trainees, competent nurse endoscopists will typically have performed in excess of 200 endoscopic procedures.

Training further utilises the latest technology in endoscopy simulation to enhance pre-clinical training, whilst advanced 3D scope imaging technology allows better supervision and learning during live endoscopy.

Advanced practice nurse endoscopists are only be trained under the auspices of the State Endoscopy Training Centre in health services able to offer medical supervision and comprehensive student support.

In 2013-14 the Victorian Government provided funding to establish a State Endoscopy Training Centre at Austin Health to lead, coordinate and provide the *HWA NE Training Pathway* for gastroenterology nurses.

The State Endoscopy Training Centre is structured in a way that allows advanced practice nurse endoscopy training to be delivered through a multi-site, partnership arrangement with health services seeking to establish and provide a multidisciplinary team based nurse endoscopy service. The training program includes simulation and skills training and clinical practice under the direct supervision of medical specialists.

How many nurse endoscopists will be introduced into Victoria's health workforce?

As at July 2015, Victoria has four competent advanced practice nurse endoscopists available to work in multidisciplinary gastroenterological teams. The State Endoscopy Centre is also supporting five new advanced practice nurse endoscopist trainees at participating health services.

Using UK population benchmarks as a guide, over the next five to 10 years, it is estimated that approximately 90 nurse endoscopists could be utilised nationally, and of those 20 to 25 would be in Victoria.

What other countries use nurse endoscopists? Is it successful?

International experience in nurse endoscopy in the UK, US and Europe demonstrate that health workforce reforms can be implemented without compromising patient safety.

In 2009, an evaluation of the comparative clinical effectiveness of doctors and nurses undertaking upper and lower gastrointestinal endoscopy was undertaken across 23 hospitals in the UK. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the clinical effectiveness of the procedure when undertaken by a doctor or a nurse. The study concluded that diagnostic endoscopy can be undertaken safely and effectively by nurses².

² Williams, J., Russell, I., Durai, D., Cheung, W.Y., Farrin, A., Bloor, K., Coulton, S. and Richardson, G., 2009, 'Effectiveness of nurse delivered endoscopy: findings from randomised multi-institution nurse endoscopy trial (MINuET), in *BMJ*; 338:b231