


NATIONAL EMERGENCY NURSES ASSOCIATION

	Standards and Practices	Emergency Nursing Core Competencies
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Emergency nursing is a specialty within the nursing profession. Emergency nurses must possess a broad body of knowledge and skills to care for various complex health care issues from non-urgent to life threatening; to a variety of age groups, involving various disease processes, body systems and specific populations.

Emergency nursing education and orientation should be based on NENA's Core Competencies as well as standardized education programs such as; Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS), Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), Trauma Nursing Core Course (TNCC), Emergency Nursing Pediatric Course (ENPC), and Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS).

A Competency is an expected level of performance that integrates knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgement. An individual who demonstrates competence is performing successfully at an expected level (Emergency Nurses Association, 2011).

The expected level of performance for an emergency nurse is fluid in its progression from novice to expert (Benner, 1982), based on the nurse's level of learning and experience.

Core Competencies

Airway

ASSESSMENT, INTERVENTION AND MONITORING IS A COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY ALL EMERGENCY NURSES

- Knowledge of airway anatomy and emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations
- Assessment of airway to determine airway patency
- Insertion of nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal airways
- Suctioning of the airway
- Utilization of non-invasive positioning to clear and open the airway, including head tilt chin lift or jaw thrust
- Perform and/or assist with insertion and maintenance of supraglottic/extraglottic airways
- Perform and/or assist with intubation, ensure correct placement of ET Tube and monitoring of the intubated patient including EtCO₂ monitoring
- Assist with emergency cricothyrotomy and/or emergency tracheostomy
- Initiate and/or assist with use of high-flow oxygenation therapy.

- Perform and/or assist with the initiation and maintenance of non-invasive positive pressure ventilation.

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Breathing

ASSESSMENT, INTERVENTION AND MONITORING OF RESPIRATORY STATUS IS A COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY ALL EMERGENCY NURSES

- Knowledge of respiratory anatomy and emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. asthma, croup, bronchiolitis, epiglottitis, COPD, pulmonary edema, pulmonary embolus)
- Assessment of effective versus ineffective ventilations
- Chest auscultation and identification of normal and abnormal breath sounds
- Knowing when to administer oxygen, the amount and by the appropriate means
- Using a bag-valve mask device
- Perform and/or assist with arterial/venous/capillary blood sampling
- Interpretation of blood gas results
- Assist with setting up, insertion of chest tubes, and monitoring chest tube drainage
- Initiation and maintenance of end-tidal CO₂ monitoring.
- Interpretation and monitoring of oxygen saturation
- Collection of peak flow measurements.
- Identification of life-threatening respiratory conditions and perform and/or assist with appropriate interventions
- Care of patient with non-invasive and invasive airway interventions in the emergency department.

Circulation

ASSESSMENT, INTERVENTION AND MONITORING OF CIRCULATORY STATUS IS A COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY ALL EMERGENCY NURSES

- Recognition and treatment of shock syndromes for the adult/pediatric/geriatric patient: cardiogenic, hypovolemic, distributive, and obstructive
- Initiates sepsis screening and interventions
- Acquisition and interpretation of vital signs
- Assessment of effective circulation in the pediatric patient (central and peripheral pulses, capillary refill, skin color, temperature and moisture)
- Auscultation and identification of normal and abnormal heart sounds
- Perform and maintain IV access
- Perform and/or assist with insertion and maintenance of intraosseous access
- Understanding/utilizing principles of rapid fluid administration/devices
- Understands/utilizes principles of blood transfusion
- Understanding/utilizing principles of massive transfusion
- Administering all types of fluid replacement (i.e. crystalloids, blood products)
- Interpretation of lab values
- Assist with insertion of central venous and arterial lines

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- Accessing and drawing blood from central lines and intravenous access devices
- Maintenance of a normothermic environment (i.e. warming/cooling blankets, warmed fluids, etc.)

Cardiovascular

INITIAL CARDIOVASCULAR ASSESSMENT, INTERVENTION AND MONITORING IS A COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY ALL EMERGENCY NURSES

- Assessment and knowledge of interventions for Acute Coronary Syndromes
- Basic cardiac monitoring and interpretation
- Perform and assess 12 and 15/16 lead ECG's
- Knowledge of Fibrinolytic protocols
- Knowledge of Targeted Temperature Management protocols
- Perform and/or assist with defibrillation, cardioversion and pacing
- Assist with pericardiocentesis
- Knowledge and interventions related to pharmacology and protocols for the cardiovascular system (i.e. antiarrhythmics, antihypertensives, vasopressors, inotropes)

Neurological

INITIAL NEUROLOGICAL ASSESSMENT, INTERVENTION AND MONITORING IS A COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY ALL EMERGENCY NURSES

- Knowledge of neurological emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations
- Assessment of level of consciousness
- Interpretation of neurological signs and symptoms in context with history
- Assessment of Glasgow Coma Scale
- Assessment and knowledge of appropriate interventions for headaches
- Assessment and knowledge of appropriate interventions for seizures
- Assessment and knowledge of interventions for head injury (e.g. increased intracranial pressure, and administration of hyperosmotics such as Mannitol)
- Assessment and knowledge of interventions for Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) and stroke.
- Knowledge of Fibrinolytic and/or embolization/revascularization protocols
- Assessment and knowledge of interventions for spinal cord/vertebral injury
- Perform and/or assist with application of cervical collars
- Perform and/or assist with spinal motion restrictions
- Non-pharmacological pain management therapies
- Evaluation of pain utilizing an appropriate pain scale
- Pharmacological management of pain
- Assessment and knowledge of interventions for organic brain syndrome (dementia and Alzheimer's disease)
- Assessment and knowledge of interventions for acute confusional state (delirium)
- Knowledge of toxidromes producing neurological effects.

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Physical Assessment and Intervention

PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT IS A COMPETENCY REQUIRED BY ALL EMERGENCY NURSES

Maxillofacial, Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat

- Knowledge of EENT emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. Otitis, peritonsillar abscess, foreign body, sensory changes, angioedema, epistaxis)
- Measure visual acuity
- Perform eye irrigation (e.g. Morgan Lens insertion and care)
- Assess and assist in management of epistaxis (e.g. nasal packing and balloon catheters)
- Assess and assist in management of post tonsillectomy hemorrhage
- Assist with removal of foreign body
- Assist with care of displaced teeth and/or replantation
- Assist with incision and drainage of peritonsillar abscess

Abdomen

- Knowledge of abdominal emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. obstructed bowel, GI bleed, pancreatitis, cholecystitis, appendicitis, pyloric stenosis, intussusception, constipation, diarrhea)
- Inspection, auscultation, and palpation of abdomen
- Insertion of nasogastric or orogastric tubes
- Assessment and care of ostomy
- Rectal and esophageal temperature monitoring
- Rectal tube insertion
- Monitor percutaneous feeding tube

Genitourinary

- Knowledge of genitourinary emergencies for males/females specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. renal colic, urinary tract infections, pyelonephritis, hematuria, urinary retention, acute/chronic renal failure)
- Insertion/application and care of urinary/condom catheters
- Knowledge of catheter associated infections
- Assist with insertion of suprapubic catheters
- Assist with insertion of and monitoring or continuous bladder irrigation
- Perform and interpret bladder scans

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- Perform and interpret urine dipstick tests
- Perform and interpret urine pregnancy tests
- Assist with collection of urethral swabs
- Obtain urine culture samples
- Monitor fluid balance (In and Out)

Reproductive Female

- Knowledge of reproductive emergencies for females in the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. ectopic pregnancy, ovarian cyst, foreign bodies)
- Inspection, auscultation and palpation of the abdomen
- Auscultate fetal heart tones
- Recognize signs of fetal distress
- Estimate PV blood loss
- Knowledge of hospital protocol for sexual violence
- Assist with pelvic exam, collection of swabs and/or forensic evidence collection
- Knowledge of sexually transmitted illnesses
- Knowledge of abortion (spontaneous, threatened, therapeutic, septic, missed)
- Knowledge of perinatal loss including care of the patient and family
- Assessment and knowledge of obstetrical emergencies
- Assist with emergency childbirth and care of the newborn

Reproductive Male

- Knowledge of reproductive emergencies for males in the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. testicular torsion, penile/scrotal pain, priapism, prostatitis)
- Knowledge of hospital protocol for sexual violence
- Knowledge of sexually transmitted illnesses

Musculoskeletal/Integumentary

- Knowledge of various musculoskeletal and integumentary emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations (e.g. fractures, dislocations, amputations, arthritis, osteomyelitis, rashes, cellulitis, necrotizing fasciitis, skin disorders)
- Neurovascular assessment of extremities
- Assessment of the seven P's (pain, pallor, pulse, paresthesia, pressure, and paralysis)
- Assessment and intervention for compartment syndrome
- Assessment and intervention of various pain management strategies
- Splinting
- Assist with reduction and/or immobilization of fractures and dislocations
- Preservation of amputated parts
- Performing wound care of the acute and chronic wound
- Assisting with and/or performing wound closure (e.g. suturing, staples, skin glue)

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- Apply and/or assist with topical/local anesthetic
- Ring removal

Environmental

- Knowledge of impact of environmental emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations
- Assessment and interventions of burns
- Assessment and interventions of heat stroke/heat exhaustion
- Assessment and interventions of near drowning
- Assessment and interventions of hypothermia and frostbite
- Assessment and interventions of high altitude and decompression illness
- Knowledge and assessment of bites and stings (e.g. human, animal, insect, snakes, jellyfish)
- Assessment and interventions of bio-terrorism threats/attacks
- Knowledge and implementation of staff/patient safety
- Knowledge of disaster planning and policies

Toxicology

- Knowledge of various toxicological emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations
- Access to poison control information
- Knowledge of specific antidote administration
- Administration of charcoal
- Knowledge of common poisonings and methods to prevent absorption and enhance elimination
- Recognition of substance intoxication and abuse
- Knowledge of protocols and treatment for substance abuse and withdrawal

Psychiatry

- Knowledge of psychiatric emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations
- Selection of appropriate interventions to manage alterations in mental/behavioural health and ensure patient and staff safety
- Knowledge of protocols, guidelines, and laws pertaining to patients with mental/behavioural health illnesses
- Recognition of escalating behaviour
- Recognition of delirium, dementia, and depression in the geriatric population
- Knowledge and interventions for mood and personality disorders, anxiety and stress disorders, eating disorders, schizophrenia
- Knowledge of suicidal risk assessment
- Knowledge and management of patients with substance use disorder

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Psychosocial

- Provides effective and timely communication to the patient and significant others
- Ensures environment that promotes privacy and support
- Knowledge of crisis intervention as it relates to the patient, family and significant others
- Provision of reassurance, acceptance and encouragement during times of stress
- Recognition of signs of abuse in the pediatric/elder/vulnerable patient
- Recognition and knowledge of intimate partner violence
- Knowledge of cultural awareness and sensitivity

Immunology/Hematology/Endocrinology

- Knowledge of immunologic/hematologic/endocrine emergencies specific to the adult/pediatric/geriatric populations
- Assessment and interventions for hyperglycemic emergencies (Diabetic Ketoacidosis, Hyperglycemic Hyperosmolar Syndrome)
- Assessment and interventions for hypoglycemia
- Assessment and interventions for thyroid emergencies (e.g. thyroid storm)
- Assessment and interventions for adrenal gland emergencies
- Assessment and interventions for oncologic emergencies
- Assessment and interventions for hematologic abnormalities.
- Assessment and interventions for the immunocompromised patient (e.g. HIV, neutropenia)

Medications

- Knowledge of pharmacology and medications
- Administers medication safely according to agency policy
- Knowledge of medication reconciliation

Discharge Planning

- Provides teaching to patient and/or significant others on an ongoing basis
- Provides explanations for medications, treatments, self-care, follow up and/or referrals to outside resources
- Provides additional discharge instructions via departmental handouts or community prepared documents when available
- Consults and coordinates care with specialists, allied health, and additional support services (e.g. Physiotherapy, social work, occupational therapy, home care, outpatient clinics)

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Professional Practice/Legal/Ethical Issues

The Emergency Nurse will be knowledgeable of hospital policies and procedures and provincial or national laws related to:

- Sexual violence
- Interpersonal violence
- Patient restraints
- Blood alcohol collection
- Abuse of the pediatric, geriatric, or vulnerable patient
- Criminal assault
- Gunshot or stab wound reporting
- Advanced directives
- Organ and Tissue donation
- Family presence during resuscitation
- Medical/legal cases
- Informed consent
- Unidentified patients
- Workplace violence prevention
- Infection Control
- Emergency preparedness and planning including pandemic and disaster planning

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