

Clinical Engagement Program

Information for senior doctors

Credentialling and defining the scope of clinical practice for medical practitioners in Victorian health services

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The Department of Health has developed a statewide policy to assist health services and medical practitioners to undertake credentialling and scope of practice processes for senior doctors appointed to public health services. All public health services in Victoria are required to implement this policy. The work builds on the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care's *National Standard for Credentialling and Defining the Scope of Clinical Practice 2004*, and work done previously in rural Victoria. The policy was developed with considerable input and support from clinicians and medical managers. Credentialling and scope of practice issues have received considerable publicity in recent years with concerns over patient safety. A robust and appropriate credentialling and scope of practice process for senior doctors is a key component for the provision of high quality patient care. The policy is available at:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/clinicalengagement/credentialling/index.htm>

The website contains a number of tools to assist clinicians and organisations.

What does this mean for our patients?

Our patients will be able to be reassured that patient safety is being supported through ensuring that:

- Senior doctors appointed to public hospitals have completed a thorough process of ensuring that their skills and experience match the patient's clinical needs.
- Hospitals providing clinical services are properly supporting their medical staff in the provision of those services.

What does this mean for senior doctors?

The policy supports clinical practice and recognises that doctors are central to care delivery and the development of clinical services. The policy does this by:

- Ensuring that credentialling and scope of practice processes are medically led. The policy supports doctors in clinical leadership positions.

- Ensuring that where doctors have a scope of practice to undertake a certain activity, the doctor is properly and fully supported by the organisation in the provision of that activity.
- Ensuring that doctors are actively involved in service planning and development by ensuring that clinical services match community needs, organisational capacity and medical skill sets.
- Ensuring that doctor's interests are represented in credentialling and scope of practice processes, by ensuring appropriate independent peer involvement in committee and other organisational processes. In addition, the policy entrenches appropriate independent appeals processes.
- The policy supports ongoing professional and clinical development as jointly agreed expansion of scope of practice requires organisational support.
- Where doctors work across a range of hospitals, credentialling information should be able to be shared. Scope of practice issues will however need to be clarified at each organisation, as an individual's scope of practice may vary according to the organisation's capabilities.
- Doctors who wish to introduce new procedures will need to take those procedures through organisational credentialling and scope of practice processes, to ensure that the procedure is appropriate for that organisation, and to ensure that the organisation has the staff and other capabilities required to support that procedure.

What does this mean for organisations?

Hospitals have a range of processes for credentialling and defining scope of practice. This policy will provide a minimum standard for hospitals to follow. The policy will provide benefits to organisations through:

1. The active engagement of senior medical staff in service planning and service development.
2. Ensuring that service delivery is a shared activity, supported by both hospital and medical staff.
3. Reassurance that doctors appointed to the hospital have the appropriate skills.
4. Reassurance that doctors appointed to the hospital undergo regular review to ensure that their scope of practice continues to match organisational need and capability.

For further information, please contact Sarah Harper, Senior Project Officer, Quality, Safety and Patient Experience Branch on (03) 9096 9030 or sarah.harper@health.vic.gov.au