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| Nurse endoscopy program |
| Frequently Asked Questions  OFFICIAL |

**What is a nurse endoscopist?**

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 were advanced practice endoscopy nursing roles developed?**

By expanding the scope of work that 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.

Various factors have driven the growth in demand for colonoscopy screening services in Victoria, 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 ageing population
* an increase in risk factors, such as obesity, which are associated with gastrointestinal comorbidities[[1]](#footnote-2).

Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the number of public sector colonoscopies increased by 66 per cent (from 31,374 to 52,104 colonoscopies respectively)[[2]](#footnote-3). In part, demand has increased with the introduction of the NBCSP. In 2019-20, NBCSP colonoscopy represented approximately 9 per cent of all public sector colonoscopies reported (4,901). It is foreseeable that demand will continue to steadily increase.

Interdisciplinary teams of health professionals will help meet the growing demand for endoscopy services. Teams of medical, nursing and allied health staff work collaboratively and use their skills to full capacity to provide safe, high-quality and patient-centred care.

**What are the benefits of nurse endoscopy?**

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

The introduction of 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.

Nurse endoscopy means real benefits to patients and public health services. This means providing greater access to services for suitable patients that require follow up screening and review services It also builds workforce capacity in the form of extra nurses and new lists, in addition to the current medical endoscopy lists.

**Do other countries have successful nurse endoscopy programs?**

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[[3]](#footnote-4). The study concluded that diagnostic endoscopy can be undertaken safely and effectively by nurses.

**Is there an active nurse endoscopy training program operating in Victoria?**

No, however there are resources available to assist health organisations interested in developing Nurse Endoscopist roles within their workforce.

A formalised training program was previously provided by the State Endoscopy Training Centre (SETC), through Austin Health in partnership with the Victorian Department of Health. Individual health services can access the resources developed by the SETC, now adapted for use by other organisations at [Advance practice nurse endoscopists](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/furthering-your-nursing-and-midwifery-career/advance-practice-nurse-endoscopists) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/furthering-your-nursing-and-midwifery-career/advance-practice-nurse-endoscopists>.

**What training do advance practice nurse endoscopists need to undertake to practice in Victoria?**

Under the Expanded Scope of Practice program, highly qualified and experienced nurses within the endoscopy field undertake 12-18 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 more than 200 endoscopic procedures.

Nurse endoscopists will only be trained within health services that can offer the appropriate medical supervision, leadership and comprehensive student support.

**What entry requirements should be considered when developing a nurse endoscopy program?**

Trainee nurse endoscopists need familiarity with gastroenterology and colorectal service environments, the experience to undertake a new workforce role, capacity for postgraduate study, and an interest in contributing to research outcomes.

To achieve this, the SETC pathway adopted the following entry requirements:

* five years clinical experience as a Registered Nurse (post registration)
* three years nursing experience within the gastroenterology specialty, including two years (concurrent) experience in endoscopy
* a relevant post graduate qualification.

**How many nurse endoscopists have been introduced into Victoria’s health workforce?**

As of January 2021, Victoria has nurse endoscopy programs operating in ten health services, utilising the expertise of 15 nurse endoscopists.

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

**What are the steps Victorian health services should consider if they identify a need to develop their own nurse endoscopy service?**

The department has collated a suite of documents, initially developed by Austin Health, to support health services considering implementing a nurse endoscopy service. These documents include an *Organisational Readiness Checklist*and an *Advanced Practice Nurse Endoscopist Trainee Position Description*.

Completing the organisational checklist will help your organisation articulate a need for a nurse endoscopy service, identify and engage relevant stakeholders, and develop a service delivery model and support clinical governance structures.

The ongoing support of medical and nursing champions, clinical leaders and the medical practitioners within a health service’s gastroenterology or colorectal surgical units, is vital to the successful implementation of a nurse endoscopy service.

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1. Department of Health 2010, Endoscopy in Victoria’s Public Health Services, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Data provided by Screening and Cancer Prevention, Prevention and Population Health Branch, Public Health Division,

   Department of Health (Victoria) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 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 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)