

Department of Human Services - Clinical Engagement Program

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

Grant Phelps, FRACP, MBA, Gastroenterologist & Clinical Leader, Department of Human Services.

The Department of Human Services has developed a statewide policy to assist hospitals and clinicians to undertake credentialling and scope of practice processes for senior Doctors appointed to public health services. All public hospitals in Victoria will need to utilise this policy. The work builds on the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care's National Standard for *Credentiailling 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 central plank in the provision of high quality patient care. The policy is available at

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

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:

- o *Senior Doctors appointed by public hospitals have been through a thorough process of ensuring that their skills and experience match the patient's clinical need.*
- o *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 is strongly supportive of Medical Practice, and indeed, recognises that doctors are central to care delivery and the development of clinical services. The policy does this by:

- o *Ensuring that credentialling and scope of practice processes are medically led. The policy is strongly supportive of doctors in Clinical Leadership positions.*
- o *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.*
- o *Ensuring that doctors are actively involved in service planning and development, by ensuring that clinical services match community demand, organisational capacity and medical skill sets.*
- o *Ensuring that doctors 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.*

- o *The policy supports ongoing professional and clinical development in that jointly agreed expansion of scope of practice requires organisational support.*
- o *Where doctors work across a range of hospitals, the credentialling element 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 in organisations of varying capability.*
- o *Doctors who wish to introduce new techniques will need to take those techniques through organisational credentialling and scope of practice processes, to ensure that the technique is appropriate for that organisation, and to ensure that the organisation has the staff and other capabilities required to undertake that technique.*

What does this mean for organisations?

Hospitals have a range of processes for Credentialling and Scope of Practice. This policy will provide a baseline or 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 are appropriately skilled for the task*
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, Department of Human Services, Statewide Quality Branch on (03) 9096 9030 or sarah.harper@dhs.vic.gov.au