

Medical Services

Module overview

Please note: This module must be read in conjunction with the Fundamentals of the Framework (including the glossary and acronym list) and the Children’s Medical Services module.

Medical services include a broad range of internal medicine services. These services focus on the prevention, early detection and management of chronic disease. Effective resuscitation and stabilisation procedures and practices are essential in all levels of medical services.

Children have specific needs in health services—please refer to the relevant children’s services modules.

The capability of each service level is based on the:

- supporting clinical services required to diagnose, treat and manage the condition
- continuity of patient care, achieved through communication and collaboration between the health services in the local community—including the local hospital—and any medical service able to provide higher level medical services (e.g. a Level 4 service providing support to a Level 3 service) through documented processes
- skills and experience of the staff
- physical status of the patient
- availability of and access to transport and diagnostic services
- clinical decision-making processes within the service.

Medical services include:

Medical services	Medical services within Framework modules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction medicine • Clinical genetics • Clinical immunology • Clinical pharmacology • Dermatology • Endocrinology • Gastroenterology • General internal medicine • Geriatric medicine • Infectious diseases • Neurology • Rheumatology • Sexual health • Sleep medicine • Thoracic medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardiology (Cardiac Services module) • Children’s oncology (Children’s Cancer Services module and Children’s Radiation Oncology Services module) • Children’s medicine (Children’s Medical Services module) • Clinical haematology, including haematological malignancy (Haematological Malignancy Services module) • Medical oncology (Medical Oncology Services module) • Palliative medicine (Palliative Care Services module) • Radiation oncology (Radiation Oncology Services module) • Rehabilitation medicine (Rehabilitation Services module) • Renal medicine (Renal Services module)

Table 1 outlines categories of medical patient risk to facilitate the selection of appropriate services following patient presentation. Because a patient’s diagnosis may not be clearly established on presentation and their course may change during hospitalisation, it is essential to reassess patient status regularly. If the patient’s risk increases or their condition

deteriorates, transfer to a more appropriate medical service is required. Optimum patient care and management depend on timely access to required medical expertise.

Table 1: Alignment of medical risk with patient status

Level of risk	Medical patient status
Low	Low-acuity, single-system medical condition(s) without significant comorbidities
Medium	Single-system medical conditions with significant but stable comorbidities
High	High-acuity, single- or multisystem medical conditions with significant unstable comorbidities, with or without high expectation of deterioration.

Service requirements

In addition to the requirements outlined in the Fundamentals of the Framework, specific service requirements include:

- access to intensive care services that may be either:
 - off-site, where the medical service can provide immediate resuscitation and short-term cardiorespiratory support until transfer of the patient to an off-site intensive care service occurs (it would not normally be expected that patients would need to access intensive care services)
- or
- on-site, where the ability to continue longer ventilation is possible, including daily, requisite liaison with higher level services.

Level 1 Medical Service

Service description

A Level 1 service provides low-acuity, ambulatory medical care and chronic disease management (for a known diagnosis). Services, including healthcare assessment and/or minor diagnostic and treatment services, are usually provided by a registered nurse, but may be provided by another health practitioner with relevant qualifications and experience appropriate to the service provided. Other health practitioners may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers or allied health professionals. A registered medical practitioner (including general practitioner) may intermittently provide a medical service.

Where transfer to a higher level service is required, a Level 1 service will manage care until patient transfer is possible. Continuity of patient care is achieved through communication and collaboration between the health services in the local community (including the local hospital) and a Level 3 (or higher) medical service through documented processes.

Service requirements

As per module overview, plus:

- life support equipment or access to paramedic services for all services
- nurse-led services with the ability to monitor and stabilise the patient using basic 12-lead electrocardiography, pulse oximetry, spirometry and automated external defibrillator until transfer or retrieval to a higher level of service
- documented referral pathways to allied health professionals
- local policies regarding transport of blood to an accredited laboratory
- staff with venepuncture skills
- staff may have a licence to take plain-film x-rays.

Workforce requirements

A Level 1 service requires:

Medical

- access to a registered medical practitioner

Nursing

- remote area nurses (however titled) competent in providing advanced life support available 24 hours
- access to a senior registered nurse

Allied health

- access to preventative and rehabilitation services (may be provided in the community or home-based setting), including allied health services that can be local, visiting or via telehealth

Other

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, as required
- access to scientific officers, as required
- access to technical support, as required (e.g. biomedical engineering).

Support service requirements

A Level 1 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
medical imaging		1
medication		1
pathology		1
rehabilitation		1

Level 2 Medical Service

Service description

A Level 2 service may be provided as either an ambulatory service or an inpatient service that provides overnight nursing care. Patients are under the care of a registered medical practitioner.

Level 2 inpatient services are usually provided for low-acuity, single-system medical conditions. Patients with pre-existing significant comorbidities are typically not admitted at this service level.

A Level 2 service may host outreach services.

Service requirements

As per Level 1, plus:

- basic and advanced life support equipment and medications for all services, except in the case of an after-hours registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) service located on a hospital campus, where paramedic services may provide advanced life support
- a team of at least two staff on each shift.

Workforce requirements

As per Level 1, plus:

Medical

- access—24 hours—to a registered medical practitioner with relevant credentials
- a registered medical practitioner competent in providing advanced life support available within 30 minutes in normal circumstances

Nursing

- a senior registered nurse in charge on each shift
- nursing staff with relevant clinical knowledge, demonstrated evidence of ongoing clinical competency and experience appropriate to the service
- for all facilities with overnight inpatients, a minimum of two nurses on duty for the night shift, one of whom must be a registered nurse

Allied health

- access—during business hours—to allied health professionals, as required

Other

- as per Level 1 service.

Support service requirements

A Level 2 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
anaesthetic		3
medical imaging		2
medication	2	
pathology		2
rehabilitation		2

Level 3 Medical Service

Service description

A Level 3 service provides ambulatory and inpatient care that may require a subspecialty referral. These patients do not require complex diagnostic investigation. Patients are under the care of a registered medical practitioner or visiting medical officer who may be a registered medical specialist (consultant physician).

Level 3 inpatient services are usually provided for low-acuity, single-system medical conditions. However, patients with pre-existing, significant comorbidities may be admitted if their comorbidities are stable. In the case of unstable patients, liaison with a registered medical specialist (consultant physician) may be necessary to provide guidance on care management and whether patients should be transferred to a higher level service.

A Level 3 service may have access to close observation care area/beds for unstable patients and may host approved outreach services.

Service requirements

As per Level 2, plus:

- capacity to appropriately store and monitor blood products
- capacity to continuously monitor a patient with single-lead electrocardiography and oximetry
- capacity to monitor a patient with intermittent 12-lead electrocardiography and spirometry
- access to basic mechanical ventilation pending transfer to a higher level service
- documented processes established with Level 5 services
- registered medical practitioner and/or visiting medical officer available within 10 minutes in normal circumstances.

Workforce requirements

As per Level 2, plus:

- a minimum of one staff member on-site each shift who must be competent in providing advanced life support

Medical

- access—24 hours—to a registered medical practitioner or registered medical specialist (consultant physician)

Nursing

- a senior registered nurse in charge of each shift for each clinical unit

Allied health

- access—during business hours—to allied health professionals (including dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists or social workers), as required

Other

- as per Level 1 service.

Support service requirements

A Level 3 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
anaesthetic		3
medical imaging	3	
medication	3	
nuclear medicine		4
pathology		3
rehabilitation		3

Level 4 Medical Service

Service description

A Level 4 service provides definitive care for most medical patients, usually under the care of a registered medical specialist (consultant physician), except for patients with low-acuity, single-system medical conditions or pre-existing significant but stable comorbidities, who may be under the care of a registered medical practitioner (general practitioner).

The scope of practice of a credentialed registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) in a Level 4 service is limited to the care of patients with low-acuity, single-system medical conditions or pre-existing significant but stable comorbidities. If a patient under the care of a registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) becomes unstable, the patient must be immediately referred to a registered medical specialist (consultant physician). High-risk medical patients should be treated by a higher level medical service with on-site intensive care service support.

A Level 4 service has access to a Level 4 intensive care service. Some medical subspecialties may be available. A Level 4 service may host and/or provide an outreach service to lower level services.

Service requirements

As per Level 3, plus:

- an on-site 24-hour medical emergency team (however titled)
- capability for bi-level positive airway pressure/continuous positive airway pressure for acute care
- mechanical and emergency ventilation pending patient transfer to the appropriate intensive care unit (ICU)
- care for high-risk medical patients provided only in an on-site ICU
- an endoscopy service and access to bronchoscopy (where an endoscopy service is provided, refer to specific requirements in the Perioperative Services module)
- cardiac investigations (including cardiac stress testing, Holter monitoring and echocardiography)
- access to other clinical measurements, as required
- may have specialist services in chronic disease management.

Workforce requirements

As per Level 3, plus:

Medical

- access—24 hours—to a registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) and/or registered medical specialist (consultant physician)
- a registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) and registered medical specialist (consultant physician) competent in providing advanced life support

Nursing

- a nurse manager (however titled) in charge of medical services
- a nurse manager (however titled) within each medical unit

Allied health

- access—24 hours—to a physiotherapist where an ICU is located on-site

Other

- access to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison service, as required.

Support service requirements

A Level 4 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
anaesthetic		4
cardiac (cardiac medicine)	3	
intensive care		4
medical imaging	4	
medication	4	
mental health (relevant section/s)		4
nuclear medicine		4
pathology		4
perioperative (endoscopy)		5
rehabilitation		4
surgical		3

Level 5 Medical Service

Service description

A Level 5 service provides definitive care for all medical patients. This care generally includes, but is not limited to, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, general internal medicine, geriatric medicine, haematology, infectious diseases, neurology, oncology, renal medicine and thoracic medicine.

Patients must be admitted under the care of a registered medical specialist (consultant physician), except for patients with low-acuity, single-system medical conditions or pre-existing significant but stable comorbidities, who may be under the care of a registered medical practitioner (general practitioner).

The scope of practice of a credentialed registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) in a Level 5 service is limited to the care of patients with low-acuity, single-system medical conditions or pre-existing significant but stable comorbidities. If a patient under the care of a registered medical practitioner (general practitioner) becomes unstable, the patient must be immediately referred to a registered medical specialist (consultant physician).

A Level 5 service treats complex and critically ill medical patients and takes a multidisciplinary team approach to patient care.

Service requirements

As per Level 4, plus:

- access to addiction medicine, clinical genetics, clinical pharmacology, dermatology, immunology and allergy, palliative medicine, persistent pain services, rare diseases expertise, rehabilitation and rheumatology
- access to a cardiac catheter laboratory
- access to haemodialysis
- emergency endoscopy and bronchoscopy services
- access to neurological investigations and monitoring (e.g. electroencephalography and electromyography)
- access to respiratory investigations, including full respiratory function testing and sleep studies
- access to negative/positive pressure rooms.

Workforce requirements

As per Level 4, plus:

Medical

- lead clinician responsible for clinical governance of the service with overall responsibility for medicine (e.g. Director of General Internal Medicine, Director of Medical Services or physician representative on the Medical Advisory Committee)
- access—24 hours—to registered medical specialists (consultant physicians)
- access to registered medical specialists with credentials in the appropriate subspecialty
- a registered medical practitioner (excluding emergency department staff) on-site 24 hours

- additional registered medical practitioners appropriate to acuity and bed capacity

Nursing

- nursing staff able to provide close observation care

Allied health

- allied health professionals who may have specialty skills, as required

Other

- as per Level 4 service.

Support service requirements

A Level 5 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
anaesthetic	4	
cardiac (cardiac care unit)	5	
intensive care	5	
medical imaging	4	
medication	5	
mental health (relevant section/s)		4
nuclear medicine		4
palliative care		5
pathology	4	
perioperative (endoscopy)	5	
rehabilitation		4
renal		4
surgical		4

Level 6 Medical Service

Service description

A Level 6 service provides the highest level and most complex medical care, and may include a statewide and/or superspecialty service. This level service is generally provided at a large metropolitan hospital by a multidisciplinary team available 24 hours a day. Patients must be admitted under the care of a registered medical specialist (consultant physician).

A Level 6 service provides an approved outreach service to lower level services and may include statewide referrals.

Service requirements

As per Level 5, plus:

- cardiac investigations, including interventional cardiology (therapeutic procedures)
- an active clinical audit program.

Workforce requirements

As per Level 5, plus:

Medical

- as per Level 5 service

Nursing

- as per Level 5 service

Allied health

- senior allied health professionals with advanced specialty skills and involved in education and research appropriate to their specialty, as required

Other

- as per Level 4 service.

Support service requirements

A Level 6 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
anaesthetic	5	
cardiac (cardiac care unit)	6	
intensive care	6	
medical imaging	5	
medication	5	
mental health (relevant section/s)		4
nuclear medicine	5	
palliative care		5
pathology	5	
perioperative (endoscopy)	5	
rehabilitation		5
renal		5
surgical		5

Legislation, regulations and legislative standards

Refer to the Fundamentals of the Framework for details.

Non-legislative standards, guidelines, benchmarks, policies and frameworks

Refer to the Fundamentals of the Framework for details.