

Nurse navigators

What is a nurse navigator?

A nurse navigator is a role being introduced into Queensland's public health sector to support a patient's journey through an increasingly complex health system. The navigator will focus on the patient's entire health care journey and all their health needs, rather than just on a specific disease or condition. This will ensure patients are directed to and linked in with the most appropriate service when needed, to enable them to move seamlessly between different health services. This will make the journey through the health system easier for the patient and more efficient for the Hospital and Health Service.

How will a nurse navigator assist patients?

Nurse navigators will play a dedicated coordination role that helps patients navigate from their referring primary care provider, through hospital-based care, and back home again.

By coordinating care for the patient across a range of service providers, nurse navigators will provide patients with an end-to-end service that is focused on safe and quality patient care. As experienced nurses with clinical knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of the health system, nurse navigators can identify a patient's health care needs and link them to the most appropriate service provider to ensure the patient receives the right care at the right time and in the right place. A nurse navigator may assist a patient with a number of functions including developing a care plan, being the patient's key point of contact, liaising with other care providers on the patient's behalf to obtain information, and scheduling appointments. The nurse navigator will also be able to inform and educate patients about their health needs and on opportunities to self-manage their health and wellbeing.

Why is this service being delivered by nurses?

Nurse navigators will be caring for patients with complex health conditions who require a high degree of clinical care. Nurses have the breadth and depth of clinical skills required to monitor high needs patients and to identify what action is needed to address their care needs most appropriately. In addition to their clinical skills, nurses have in-depth knowledge of the health system and its providers that enables them to direct patients to where they can receive the most appropriate care at the appropriate time. Through their knowledge and understanding of the treatment of health conditions, nurse navigators are also able to educate patients about self-managing their health conditions and to prepare them to participate in decisions about their care.

When will this service be available?

Hospital and Health Services across the state have already commenced planning for the delivery of this new service in a manner that specifically targets the needs of their local communities. These roles will gradually be introduced into Queensland's public hospitals from early 2016.

Who will be able to access the service and how?

The nurse navigator service will provide end-to-end care for those patients with the greatest health care needs. This may include patients with multiple chronic illnesses, those with a high need for health services, or those who have complicated health conditions. These patients will be identified by the health system and connected with a nurse navigator.

How will this benefit patients?

Patients will receive a more integrated approach to their health care, which will ensure they are directed to the most appropriate service, when and where needed. This service will provide patients with a smooth,

seamless transition between different service providers. By building a patient's awareness of their health care needs and the services available to assist them, nurse navigators will also educate and empower patients so they are better able to manage their own health care and better prepared for their journey through the health system.

How does a nurse navigator work with other health professionals?

The nurse navigator service complements and enhances the services provided by other health professionals, such as cancer care coordinators and social workers.

Nurse navigators play a key role in coordinating end-to-end patient care, working across functional, agency and sector boundaries to improve the integration and coordination of care across the system.

By facilitating access to services and helping patients with high and complex needs to move seamlessly through the health care system, these experienced nurses will link patients with the right health professionals, at the right time and in the right place to ensure they receive safe, quality care that meets their needs.

More information

This initiative is led by the Department of Health's Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer. For more information please visit <http://www.health.qld.gov.au>