

Nurse Navigators

Information sheet

Queensland's health sector is facing increasing challenges driven by a growing and aging population, an increasing burden of chronic diseases, a complex health system, increased demand for services and a constrained funding environment. A key priority for Queensland Health is to address these challenges, ensure patient safety and provide quality care.

Nurses have a significant impact on patient safety and health outcomes. Evidence suggests that strengthening the nursing workforce can improve access to health services, shorten the length of stay in hospital for patients, improve clinical outcomes, reduce waiting times, and lower inpatient mortality.

Nurse navigator—a new model of care

As part of the *Nursing Guarantee* policy, Queensland Health has introduced a new nurse navigator model of care that has additional 400 senior nursing and midwifery roles added to the state's Hospital and Health Services over the next four years.

The nurse navigator roles are clinical roles held by experienced nurses and midwives with expert clinical knowledge and in-depth understanding of the health system, whose focus is to support patients with complex health care needs. These nurses and midwives have the breadth and depth of clinical skills required to identify and monitor the health care requirements of high needs patients, identify the appropriate action required and to facilitate timely access to appropriate services.

Nurse navigators play a key role in supporting and coordinating a patient's entire health care journey, rather than focusing on just a specific disease or condition. This role is underpinned by the principles of delivering coordinated and patient-centred care, creating partnerships across different health providers and sectors, improving patient outcomes and enabling improvements across the system.

Research shows that a large number of patients find it difficult to successfully access, understand, evaluate and communicate health information to improve their health. Through their knowledge of the treatment of health conditions nurse navigators will also help educate patients about self-management of their health needs and empower them to make decisions on their own health care.

This integrated and proactive approach to health care service delivery will help ensure patients receive the most appropriate service when and where they need it. In some cases, this may even reduce their need for hospital admission.

Benefits

Patients, particularly those with complex health care needs requiring services from numerous care providers, or those who have presented multiple times to a health service, stand to benefit from the nurse navigator service. Through a clinical focus and understanding, these nurses ensure a patient is treated in the correct place, at the correct time, by the correct health care professional.

The service provided by nurse navigators will complement other care coordination services through the development of partnerships across sectors and providers, ensuring a system-wide, integrated approach to health service delivery. This will help patients with high and complex needs to move seamlessly through the health system, linking them with the right health professionals at the right time and in the right place, and ensuring they receive care that is tailored to their needs.

More efficient use of resources in service delivery also results in lower system-wide costs, particularly for those populations with multiple health and social needs, and significant productivity gains for all health professionals and the broader health system.