



**AUSTRALASIAN
HEPATOLOGY
ASSOCIATION**

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AHA CONSENSUS STATEMENT:

**NURSE-LED SERVICES
FOR THE MANAGEMENT
OF PATIENTS WITH
LIVER DISEASE IN
AUSTRALIA**

This Consensus Statement reflects the position of the Australasian Hepatology Association (AHA) Board of Management (2015) in relation to nurse-led services for the management of patients with liver disease in Australia.

1. Hepatology nurses have a critical role in care coordination for people living with chronic liver disease. Hepatology nurses work in a range of health care environments including tertiary hospitals, community and forensic settings. The diverse role incorporates co-ordination of testing and provisional diagnosis, assessment, treatment and management; in collaboration with members of the multidisciplinary team including medical specialists, general practitioners, allied health professionals and community-based organisations.
2. Hepatology nurses are a cost effective option to support and deliver the implementation of high quality, specialist care across the continuum of care. Hepatology nursing care is an ambulatory service that keeps patients out of hospital.
3. Investment in nurse-led models/services for both the delivery of ongoing clinical management and the provision of education and support (to patients and the wider health care team), surveillance and treatment is an evidence-based, timely approach.



Background

The Australasian Hepatology Association (AHA) is a membership-based organisation representing and supporting nurses and allied health professionals caring for patients with liver disease in Australia and New Zealand. Hepatology nurses are “registered nurses who apply advanced knowledge, expertise and skills in the testing, management and treatment of liver disease to optimise the health and

wellbeing of patients across the continuum of care”¹. Hepatology nurses work in metropolitan, regional and rural settings in tertiary care, primary care including general practice, sexual health clinics, mental health services, alcohol and other drugs services, multicultural health services and community health centres, custodial settings, antenatal services and Aboriginal medical services; and are considered an integral member of the multidisciplinary team caring for patients with liver disease ².



Current situation in Australia

In collaboration with a medical specialist, hepatology nurses are involved in educating, supporting and providing nursing care for patients with liver disease during their management and treatment journey. Nurse-led clinics already exist in Australia for the care and management of patients with hepatitis B,³

hepatitis C,^{4, 5, 6} advanced liver disease⁷ and hepatocellular carcinoma.⁸ Several Australian jurisdictions have committed significant investment to deliver nurse-led models of care for hepatitis C patient assessment, management and treatment.^{9, 10, 11}

The development of nurse-led services is expanding around the world due to their established benefits including increased patient satisfaction, longer consultation times and timely access to specialist services across a range of chronic diseases.^{12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17} Nurse-led services provide an opportunity for patients to access the skills of a specialist nurse which enhances the quality of care through the provision of extensive patient education and support.¹⁸ Practically, the nurse-led model requires the specialist and the advanced practice nurse to co-ordinate and facilitate the delivery of health care for the patient, and collaborate with, and manage communication between members of the multi-disciplinary team regarding the patient's management plan.^{19, 20} In addition, nurse-led services have a measurable cost benefit to the health system by reducing health costs with specialist nurses allowing medical staff more time to attend to patients with complex health needs.²¹

While the AHA endorses nurse-led services, it acknowledges that it is solely the responsibility of the individual to understand that they must work with standards established through legislation, common law and the relevant professional standards and frameworks.²² Underpinning the principles of hepatology nursing practice, is the acknowledgement that Hepatology Nurses need to have an understanding of their individual scope of practice.²³

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