

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NURSES ASSOCIATION



Position Statement	Role of the Triage Nurse
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Issue

Triage is a unique and complex aspect of emergency nursing. Patients arriving to the Emergency Department need rapid assessment to prioritize their level of urgency.

Treatments initiated at triage can improve patient outcomes and satisfaction. Advanced and specialized skills are required to perform this function competently and independently.

As Emergency Departments deal with overcrowding, patients can experience longer wait times to be triaged, and longer times in the waiting room (Van der Linden et al., 2016). These challenges can contribute to triage fatigue among even experienced triage nurses (Reay et al., 2019).

NENA Position

NENA believes that triage is a sorting process that utilizes critical thinking and a standardized set of guidelines, in which an experienced Registered Nurse assesses patients upon arrival to the Emergency Department. Triage requires rapid assessment of the patient's presenting complaint, assigning an acuity level and directing the patient to appropriate location and resources. Patient conditions can change; the triage nurse ensures reassessment of the patient.

Triage data collection also contributes information that helps to define departmental acuities, operational plans, and define Emergency Department roles within the institution and health care system.

NENA believes a Registered Nurse must have additional education and experience in order to triage. "The process of triage is best carried out by registered nurses and nurse practitioners with emergency nursing expertise who have completed a triage-specific educational program" (ENA, 2017).

The triage nurse must have:

- well-developed personal traits
- cognitive characteristics
- behavioural characteristics

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- expert assessment
- critical thinking
- clinical judgement
- prioritization skills

The triage nurse must complete the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale course, ~~as well as meet~~ and adhere to the Emergency Nursing Scope and Standards of Canadian Practice (National Emergency Nurses Association, 2018)

NENA believes that individual agencies must have a process to ensure ongoing competency and quality assurance/improvement.

Rationale

The process of triage is essential for safe and appropriate care of the emergency department patient.

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