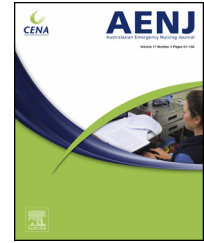




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LITERATURE REVIEW

HIRAID: An evidence-informed emergency nursing assessment framework



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KEYWORDS

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Summary

Introduction: Emergency nurses must be highly skilled at performing accurate and comprehensive patient assessments. In 2008, the inaugural emergency nursing assessment framework (ENAF) was devised at Sydney Nursing School, to provide emergency nurses with a systematic approach to initial patient assessment. In 2014 the assessment framework was re-developed to reflect the most recent evidence.

Aim: To describe the process and evidence used to re-develop ENAF, to provide ED nurses with an evidence-informed approach to the comprehensive assessment of patients presenting to ED after triage, so that it may be implemented and tested in the clinical (simulated) setting.

Methods: A thorough literature review was conducted to inform the re-development of ENAF. Literature review findings were reviewed and ENAF was re-developed by a panel of expert emergency nursing clinicians using the Delphi Technique.

Results: Modifications to ENAF were undertaken and a new, more comprehensive assessment framework was developed titled 'HIRAID'. HIRAID is informed by current evidence, comprising of seven assessment components: History; Identify Red flags; Assessment; Interventions; Diagnostics; reassessment and communication.

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Conclusion: HIRAID provides an evidence-informed systematic approach to initial patient assessment performed by emergency nurses after triage. Evaluation is now needed to determine its impact on clinician performance and patient safety.

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What is known

- Emergency department (ED) nurses must be highly skilled at performing comprehensive patient assessments to determine the urgency and treatment needs of undifferentiated patients presenting to the ED.
- A structured approach to patient assessment can enhance clinical performance and has the potential to improve patient care delivery.
- The Emergency Nursing Assessment Framework (ENAF) was developed in 2008 as part of a university curriculum to guide ED nurses approach to initial ED nursing patient assessment.

What this paper adds?

- A revised assessment framework, HIRAID, depicts the current available evidence for emergency nursing patient assessment in a clear and concise manner.
- The HIRAID framework provides a structured, evidence-informed approach to the initial nursing assessment of patients presenting to the ED after triage.
- The HIRAID framework encapsulates the complex and continuous process of nursing assessment in the ED, comprising of the seven critical components: *History; Identify Red flags; Assessment; Interventions; Diagnostics; reassessment; and communication.*

Introduction

The prominence of undifferentiated patients presenting to the emergency department (ED) without a clear medical diagnosis or baseline data to distinguish between the well and critically ill, requires ED nurses to be highly skilled at performing accurate and timely patient assessments. When patients first present to the ED, the triage nurse performs a brief assessment and allocates a triage category indicating the level of urgency of the presenting problem (how long the patient can wait to be seen by a medical officer).¹ After triage patients are normally located to a treatment area and the allocated nurse is responsible for performing a more comprehensive assessment and commencing nursing care.

ED nurses' ability to perform an accurate initial comprehensive patient assessment after triage is imperative to recognise the urgency and treatment needs of patients and to develop baseline data from which any changes in

the condition of patients may be measured against. This can be challenging due to the chaotic environment of the ED with nurses experiencing frequent interruptions, primarily related to face-to-face communications² and heavy workloads.³ Failure to perform timely and accurate patient assessments has been reported to result in adverse patient outcomes.⁴

Historically, it has been recommended for nurses to have experience in critical care settings before commencing work in the ED to meet these essential skills of assessment.⁵ However today, in many Australian hospitals, new graduate nurses may start their nursing careers in the ED, with minimal prior clinical experience performing initial patient assessments.

Theoretical frameworks provide a structure for nursing practice and guide decision-making processes of clinicians.⁶ A structured approach to patient assessment has been shown to enhance clinician performance and has the potential to improve the delivery of care and subsequent patient outcomes.⁷ Only one literature review was found to evaluate assessment frameworks designed to guide the comprehensive assessment of patients in the acute setting.⁷ The review was unable to identify any evidence-based assessment framework designed to guide the general comprehensive nursing assessment of patients presenting to ED.⁷ Such a standardised approach would likely enhance the assessment skills of ED nurses and contribute to the delivery of safe patient care.

The need for an emergency nursing assessment framework was initially recognised by a team of academics from the Sydney Nursing School, University of Sydney whilst reviewing the Emergency Nursing Post Graduate course curricula in 2008.⁸ A theoretical framework was considered necessary to guide the comprehensive assessment of patients performed by ED nurses after triage, based on existing knowledge surrounding emergency nursing practice and the demands of the clinical environment. The nursing process provides an organised, logical way for nurses to problem solve and meet the needs of patients expressing nursing practice in five stages: *assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation.*⁹ As nursing practice varies considerably between specialty care areas it cannot be accurately captured in one theoretical model.¹⁰

The emergency nursing assessment framework (ENAF) was subsequently devised by three highly experienced emergency nurse consultants in collaboration with an education consultant.⁸ ENAF depicts the emergency nursing assessment process from when the patient first presents to the ED (after triage) until despatch, when patients leave the ED having been discharged or transferred to another ward or hospital. It consists of five steps: *history; red flags; assessment; interventions; and investigations*, which may

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