Position Statement

The Role of the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager

Each ward/unit, service or team must have a Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager appointed. The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager position combines leadership, management, clinical and teaching roles and is integral to the ability of the healthcare system to achieve quality patient care outcomes.

The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager is a registered nurse/midwife with responsibility for a ward, unit, service or team. The ward or unit should not exceed 30 beds and critical care units should not exceed 12 beds.

It is central to the quality of nursing and midwifery care and patient outcomes, job satisfaction and retention of nurses and midwives – not only within individual agencies but within the healthcare system as a whole.

To achieve quality patient outcomes, the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager must have sufficient resources that take into account the level of patient acuity and patient throughput.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager as manager/leader

The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager has a strong leadership role. As a leader, the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager exhibits communication and problem solving skills, a keen understanding of the dynamic nature of the health sector and of clinical governance, an ability to instigate change, delegate responsibilities, encourage professional development and enhance the quality of nursing and midwifery practice.

The responsibilities of the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager are pivotal to an intra-disciplinary management approach based on an understanding of the processes and systems involved in the provision of patient care. In this context, admission and discharge (bed management), for example, are co-ordinated by the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager but are the shared management responsibilities of the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager and the medical practitioner. This approach enhances the quality of patient care and increases staff satisfaction and participation.
The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager management responsibilities also include recruitment, retention, professional development of staff, financial management, occupational health and safety and return to work programs.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager gives staff the opportunity to engage in education and research on an individual basis and in collaboration with others. As it is critical to attaining quality patient outcome, this role should be properly funded and supported by the organisation.

- Financial management by the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager is optimised through the co-operation of all health professionals involved in the provision of patient care. Financial data, education, information technology and financial expertise must be available to support the role.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager ensures that occupational health and safety policies and practices are designed to minimise/eliminate risks to the health and safety of staff and patients and that staff and patients adhere to these policies and practices. The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager also facilitates the provision of appropriate rehabilitation and return to work programs for staff who have been injured at work.

### The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager as clinician

The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager as clinician has an extensive teaching/mentoring/enhancing role, which encompasses all health professionals involved in a patient's health care as well as the patient and their family.

As an expert clinician, the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager establishes the standards of nursing or midwifery practice and ensures optimal patient care. The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager has expert clinical knowledge that is central to the management of the particular clinical specialty. This professional nursing/midwife knowledge is required to make judgements and decisions about the quality and resources required for clinical services and the clinical insight to understand the environmental support and resources required for optimal care and service provision. The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager has a lead role in ensuring that the working environment is one in which all nursing staff or midwifery staff, including students and new graduates, are encouraged to strive towards and achieve excellence in nursing or midwifery care.

### The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager as educator

A Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager requires an excellent understanding of current trends, research and policies in their area of nursing or midwifery practice and utilises this knowledge to promote and encourage professional development and to develop effective networks across the multi-disciplinary team.

The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager must have access to contemporary teaching techniques and principles to ensure the clinical role is supported. He/she also needs to develop professional formal and informal links, both internally and externally, for the purposes of accessing quality nursing or midwifery resources and education.
Optimising the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager role

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager should have no direct patient care allocation in order to focus attention on optimising patient outcomes through:
  - the adherence to and promotion of clinical governance
  - excellence in nursing/midwifery practice and clinical research
  - professional development for nursing and/or midwifery staff
  - quality and safety programs
  - human resources management
  - involvement in relevant internal committees
  - benchmarking activities
  - risk management activities
  - financial planning
  - unit and organisation strategic planning
  - unit and organisation protocol and policy development.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager requires the authority for decision making in the areas for which he/she is both responsible and accountable.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager needs to have access to professional development that enhances management skills, including those required for financial planning.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager needs access to research funds and/or the ability to instigate or become involved in nursing or midwifery research. Access to study leave which is of benefit to the organisation must be available to the Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager is involved in quality and safety programs in order to be involved in the evaluation of clinical standards and quality of care at both the unit and organisational level.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager has relevant professional postgraduate qualifications, or will be supported in the acquisition of such. Where necessary, they will have support in their role as Human Resources Manager.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager is supported by Associate Nurse/Midwife Unit Managers whose role optimises the functioning of the ward/unit and to whom nursing or midwifery management is delegated in his/her absence.

- The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager reports to senior nursing/midwifery management and has access to other nursing/midwifery resources through the organisational executive management structure.
Conclusion

The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager is at the forefront of the health care system and its ever-changing and evolving organisational and management systems. The Nurse/Midwife Unit Manager is pivotal in management and leadership in order to ensure the primary objective of the organisation – the achievement of quality patient outcomes in nursing and midwifery services - is met. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the organisation provides sufficient resources, including appropriate clinical and management nurse/midwife staffing levels, with adherence to ratios where relevant and skill mix.

Position Statement
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The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) acknowledges the Nurse/Midwife Unit Managers who contributed to the development of the original ANF Position Statement in 1998

Additional copies of this Position Statement are available from:

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