

The RACGP and ADS Joint Clinical position statement on the emergency management of hyperglycaemia

5 February 2018

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the RACGP and ADS Joint Clinical position statement on the emergency management of hyperglycaemia. We are providing this submission on behalf of our membership, Australian primary health care nurses.

Primary health care nursing refers to nursing that takes place within a range of primary health care settings, each sharing the characteristic that they are part of the first level of contact with the health system. Primary health care nurses are skilled, regulated and trusted health professionals who work in partnership with their local communities to prevent illness and promote health across the lifespan. In Australia, nurse practitioners, registered nurses (RN) and enrolled nurses (EN) practice in primary health care in a range of clinical and non-clinical roles, in urban, rural and remote settings.

APNA Submission

General comments

APNA supports the development of the position paper as it has the potential to improve early assessment and management of diabetes emergencies. Overall APNA believes the position statement and management algorithms are clear and concise.

A wide variety of primary health care services, clinicians and staff, triage and or treat hyperglycaemia emergencies. Therefore APNA suggests that the target audience for the position paper be clearly stated within the document.

Implementation of this position paper will require the support of all health professionals including receptionists and nurses who triage patients. Therefore it will be important to ensure that these types of emergencies are also represented in their respective workplace triage documents and systems.

Comments on the position statement

APNA would suggest considering an emphasis on at risk groups throughout the document. For example, the following paragraph on page one could be amended to:

- Symptoms and signs, especially polyuria, polydipsia and/or weight loss (see Box 1 and 2), “in all age groups, and particularly in children and young adults, pregnant women and older adults” should prompt urgent point of care capillary blood glucose testing. Refer to the management flowcharts for further action required.

APNA supports best practice principles for the emergency management of hyperglycaemia. Some APNA members have indicated that blood ketone testing should be the only recommended investigation undertaken for testing of ketones. However it is recognised that ketone sticks are generally more expensive and have a short shelf-life. Strategies to reduce barriers to undertake blood ketone testing may be required to encourage greater uptake of this method of testing.

Comments on the flow charts

Given that many patients are moving towards utilising insulin pumps it may be worthwhile including ‘hyperglycaemia without illness i.e. insulin pump failure’ in the first top box of both flow charts.

With regards to the last text box, APNA would suggest including further ‘actions’ that could be implemented, dependent on resources, location and expertise, while waiting/ arranging for urgent transfer. By way of example, primary health care settings may assist with the management of rehydration and undertaking ECG testing.

About APNA

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) is the peak professional body for nurses working in primary health care. APNA champions the role of primary health care nurses; to advance professional recognition, ensure workforce sustainability, nurture leadership in health, and optimise the role of nurses in patient-centred care.

APNA is bold, vibrant and future-focused. We reflect the views of our membership and the broader profession by bringing together nurses from across Australia to represent, advocate, promote and celebrate the achievements of nurses in primary health care.

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