

## **PREVENTION, WELLNESS, AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT**

### **Description**

The World Health Organization describes “health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”<sup>1</sup> Prevention, wellness, and disease management services in the emergency department have the potential to benefit individual patients and their families, the emergency department environment, and the greater community by slowing the progression of disease, preventing disease and injury, boosting patient satisfaction and staff morale, reducing repeat visits to the emergency department, decreasing healthcare costs, and improving overall community health.<sup>2,3</sup>

Providing those services can be challenging. Initiatives targeting wellness, disease management, and injury and illness prevention encompass more than one-on-one patient teaching. They involve the entire healthcare team, the family, the community, and whole populations.<sup>4</sup>

For many patients, a visit to the emergency department may be their only source of healthcare and their only opportunity to receive education regarding preventive care.

### **ENA Position**

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that:

1. Emergency nurses routinely provide prevention and wellness health teaching across the lifespan that addresses such topics as healthy lifestyles, risk-reducing behavior, developmental needs, activities of daily living, and preventive self-care.<sup>5</sup>
2. Emergency nurses employ strategies to promote health and wellness in their own lives.
3. Emergency nurses assume a leadership role in establishing prevention, wellness, and disease management treatment guidelines within their respective departments.<sup>2,3</sup>
4. Emergency nurses advocate for, support and promote public policies that protect the public from preventable disease and injury.<sup>2,3</sup>
5. Emergency nurses advocate for, support, and promote healthcare legislation that assigns accountability for preventive care to health insurance companies.<sup>4</sup>
6. Emergency nurses place increased emphasis on the need for training and skills in providing wellness, health, and prevention education and interventions.
7. Emergency nurses become actively involved in research activities to assist in identifying, developing, and evaluating the effectiveness of prevention and wellness interventions in the emergency care setting.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Background

Patient education is an essential element of the emergency department experience. For years emergency nurses have provided patients with education regarding disease management, medications, and prevention of illness and injury. Because of recent federal initiatives and the emphasis placed by society on health and well-being, emergency nurses now have the unique opportunity to actively participate in initiatives that support and promote healthcare education and research to benefit patients, families, the community, their colleagues, and themselves.<sup>6</sup> The National Prevention Strategy outlined by the federal government urges the formation of partnerships to champion the necessary strategies, policies and platforms to “move us from a nation of sick care to one based on wellness and prevention.”<sup>6</sup> These strategies include:

- Partnerships with consumers and other disciplines to identify needs, set priorities, develop strategies and evaluate progress in promoting health<sup>6</sup>
- Multidisciplinary efforts to raise consumer awareness to behaviors and environments that promote health and the growth of primary prevention models for care for the community at large<sup>6</sup>
- Policies to shape and help redirect financial and governmental choices regarding healthcare at the local and national level toward models of prevention and wellness<sup>6</sup>
- Use of the broader definition of health when educating the community regarding wellness and prevention<sup>6</sup>

The emergency nurse can be a vital link between the patient, community, hospital, and healthcare system, with numerous opportunities to influence the health and well-being of individuals, including those who are at most risk for disease and injury.<sup>5</sup> Each interaction with a patient or family member is an opportunity to teach and educate the patient and their family about prevention, wellness and disease management.<sup>2,3,7</sup>

## Additional Resources

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