



Position Statement

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Wellness and Health Promotion

Description

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”^{1(p1)} Further, the WHO suggests that to improve health, the focus should be on population-based health interventions targeting health promotion and disease prevention.² Population health is defined as the health of geographic populations and includes both traditional and social determinants of health.³ Modern healthcare delivery shifts the focus from disease management to patient-centered health promotion and disease prevention by addressing a broad array of population-based factors, including social determinants that contribute to poor health and negatively impact health outcomes.³ Internationally, weak primary healthcare and people living in fragile and vulnerable settings are ranked by the WHO as two of the top ten global threats to health.⁴

In the U.S., emergency departments (EDs) provide over 47% of the hospital-associated care annually and are the major source of healthcare for vulnerable populations.⁵ Insurance type has been shown to influence the use of ED for care, with the highest rates of use among adults with public health coverage such as Medicaid, relative to adults who are uninsured or have private health insurance.⁶ For many vulnerable patients, a visit to the ED may be their only source of healthcare and the only opportunity to receive information regarding how to improve health and prevent or slow disease progression. The emergency nurse is poised to influence health promotion and disease prevention, through targeted assessments and interventions aimed at benefitting the populations they serve.

Providing health promotion services can be challenging. Initiatives targeting health promotion, disease, and injury prevention involve the entire healthcare team, the family, the community, and the population as a whole.⁷ However, through collaboration with the greater community, nurses can make substantial contributions to slow the progression of disease and prevent disease or injury, reduce repeat visits to the ED, decrease healthcare costs, and improve overall community health.^{3,7-11}

ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) that:

1. Emergency nurses offer wellness and health promotion education/information to patients across the lifespan.
2. Emergency nurses employ strategies to promote health and prevent disease or injury in their own lives.



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3. Emergency nurses assume a leadership role in establishing wellness and health promotion recommendations within their respective departments.
4. Emergency nurses advocate for healthcare legislation that contributes to improving the health of the population on local, national, and global levels.
5. Emergency nurses place increased emphasis on the need for training and skills in providing wellness and health promotion education and interventions.
6. Emergency nurses become actively involved in research activities to assist in identifying, developing, and evaluating the effectiveness of wellness and health promotion interventions in the emergency care setting.

Background

Emergency nurses have a long-standing history of providing patients with health-related education as an essential element of the ED experience.¹⁰⁻¹² The emergency nurse offers a myriad of interventions aimed at promoting health, such as, but not limited to, evaluation of immunization status and screening for alcohol or drug misuse.¹³ Emergency nurses also routinely assess for environmental determinants that may negatively impact patient's health, such as intimate partner violence and safe housing.¹³

An important component of being effective at promoting health is to be a good role model.^{8,9} Health promotion for emergency nurses includes implementing self-care goals similar to recommendations for patients such as healthy diet, exercise, and avoidance of tobacco. Nurses are encouraged to participate in the ANA Healthy Nurse Healthy Nation campaign, whose goal is to transform the health of the nation by improving the health of nurses.¹⁴ Emergency nurses are exposed to high stress situations and are at risk for burnout. Incorporating self-care strategies including mindfulness and emotional regulation may mitigate the impact of stress on the emergency nurse, providing a positive impact on the care provided to patients.¹⁵

The emergency nurse is 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.¹² Each interaction with a patient or family member is an opportunity to inform and influence the patient and their family about health promotion, disease prevention and management.⁷⁻¹¹ As such, emergency nurses are encouraged to advocate for health policies that decrease health disparities locally, nationally, and globally with the goal to promote the health of the population.

Valuable resources for emergency nurses include the WHO and the Healthy People initiatives. The WHO lists three elements needed for health promotion enabling people to increase control over their own health¹⁶:



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- Good governance for health, which requires policy makers across all government departments to make health a central line of government policy;
- Addressing health literacy to enable people to acquire the knowledge, skills, and information needed to make healthy choices; and
- Strong leadership and commitment at the municipal level is essential to healthy urban planning and to build up preventive measures in communities and primary health care facilities.

Healthy People 2020, and the soon to be published *Healthy People 2030*, provide evidence-based recommendations for strategies to promote health nationwide.¹⁷ The overarching goals of *Healthy People* include:^{17(p1)}

- Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death;
- Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups;
- Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all; and
- Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Emergency nurses often care for vulnerable populations that have limited access to healthcare. Understanding social determinants of health, including genetics, behaviors, social environment, physical environment, and health services available can improve the health of the population and reduce healthcare disparities.¹⁸ Social determinants of health are influenced by money, power, and resources on local, national, and global levels. Social determinants of health also lead to unfair and avoidable differences in health status within and between countries.¹⁹ The patient's available resources impact planning, health promotion, disease prevention, management interventions and education.^{5,6} Level of education impacts health-seeking behaviors and understanding of health education provided.²⁰ For these reasons, effective health promotion efforts should consider the patient's social determinants such as homelessness, income, and health literacy. These factors have substantial impact on patients' ability to access medications or to make lifestyle modifications needed to change health outcomes.

Emergency nurses have the potential to substantially influence health promotion of patients during ED visits, leading to significant improvements in the health of the population at large. Additionally, emergency nurses have the opportunity to actively participate in initiatives that support and promote healthcare education and research to benefit patients, families, the community, their colleagues, and themselves. In order for nurses to be prepared to address the healthcare access challenges of vulnerable populations, contemporary nursing education programs can consider curricula that provide some public health and community nursing content and address issues related to the social determinants of health to meet the needs of the population.²¹



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