



Medical practice assistants position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation's (ANMF's) opposition to the introduction of medical practice assistants in general practice.

It should be read with the ANMF position statement: *Nurses and midwives in general practice*.

2. Definitions

Medical assistants are workers who are trained to carry out delegated administrative and clinical assisting duties specific to the outpatient care environment under the supervision of a medical practitioner.

3. Context

In some general practice environments, a medical practice assistant role has been introduced. In some practices, this role has replaced a registered nurse or enrolled nurse position. This can mislead people attending clinics to think that the assistant is a registered nurse, midwife or an enrolled nurse.

There is no evidence to support the introduction of another level of care worker into the general practice environment and the ANMF opposes it.

4. Position

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. Medical practice assistant positions should not replace registered nurse, registered midwife or enrolled nurse positions in general practice.
2. Medical practice assistants must not undertake clinical care as they are not qualified to do so – this is the role of registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses in the general practice setting.



Rationale

3. People who attend a general practice have the right to safe, competent care by regulated health practitioners.
4. Registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses are regulated health practitioners. Their practice is governed by the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (the National Law).
5. Under the National Law, registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses are registered on a publicly available register and must:
 - practise according to Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) *Professional practice framework* which stipulates registration standards, standards for practice, regulatory guidelines, and codes of ethics and conduct¹
 - have a national minimum standard of education
 - undertake mandatory continuing professional development
 - ensure safe, quality and competent practice within their scope of practice.
6. Eligibility for the Australian Government Practice nurse incentive program (PNIP) payment used to employ a nurse in general practice requires enrolled nurses to be always supervised by a registered nurse.
7. Medical practice assistants are not registered, regulated or managed in this way. This means that:
 - they do not have a national standard of education
 - they do not practice under a legislative framework
 - there is no requirement for ongoing education
 - there is no safety and quality framework underpinning their work
 - there is no transparent way for the public to be assured of their skills or knowledge
 - there are no safeguards in place for the public when a medical practice assistant undertakes aspects of clinical care in general practice.

5. Position statement management

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¹ The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Professional Practice Framework is available at <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx>.