

New generation of nurses to ease pressure

The recent introduction of nurse practitioners to the Western Australian health system has made headlines, not only in industry publications but also in the mainstream media.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery at Curtin University of Technology is currently educating this new generation of nurses, as part of the WA Department of Health's efforts to reduce patient waiting times and doctor workloads.

While nurse practitioners are already firmly established in other parts of Australia, Western Australia has only just started to discover their full potential, particularly for the state's remote and rural areas and emergency departments.

In a welcome move in September 2006, Joondalup Health Campus officially introduced the state's first two

emergency service nurse practitioners.

Branded "super nurses" by the local media, nurse practitioners have undergone additional training and are qualified to treat patients who would ordinarily have to wait to be seen by a doctor.

'Nurse practitioners are authorised to prescribe certain medications, order diagnostic tests and investigations, such as X-rays and pathology tests, refer patients to medical specialists and perform minor procedures,' said Associate Professor Rene Michael, Director of postgraduate studies at Curtin's School of Nursing and Midwifery.

'I basically look after my patients from the point when they are admitted until they are discharged,' explains Paula Davis, one of the first two emergency service nurse

practitioners working at Joondalup Health Campus. 'I can refer them to a specialist, however, they will only see a doctor if it is absolutely necessary.'

Paula sees up to 20 patients during her shift, people who would normally have to wait between four to six hours.

Although she has a demanding and often stressful career, Paula enjoys her work. 'I absolutely love it! I love the autonomy I have in my role as nurse practitioner, as well as the knowledge that I can make a difference.'

When Paula decided to return to university to study for a Bachelor of Nursing she knew that she would eventually work as an emergency nurse.

'I love change and like a fast pace. Here in the emergency department things change every minute – it's the perfect



Nurse practitioner Paula Davis at work at Joondalup Health Campus

place if you enjoy change,' she said. 'I love the real team atmosphere that is so essential in an emergency department.'

Doctors, consultants, nurses, orderlies, administrators; we all have to work closely together to respond to ever changing demands and pressures. This creates an incomparable team spirit.'

Leadership awards

Recognising the strategic importance of nursing leadership, Deakin University's School of Nursing has launched the Deakin University Leadership in Nursing Awards program.

These awards acknowledge and promote nursing leadership at all levels of nursing practice and across all settings.

It is anticipated that the Awards will acknowledge the contribution of nurses in building capacity and contributing to a sustainable, quality Australian health care system.

Nursing education and experience enables and positions nurses to shape industry change.



Australian nurses have the potential for substantial impact, comprising over half of the Australian health workforce (Productivity Commission 2005).

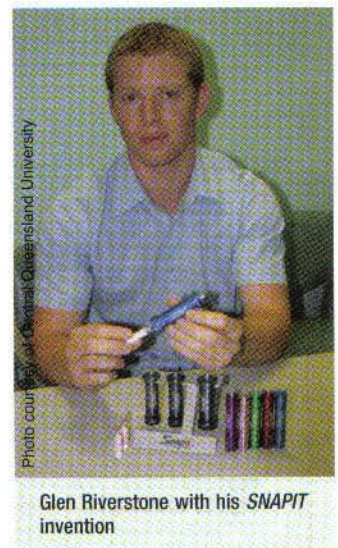
For further information on Deakin University Leadership in Nursing Awards go to <http://www.deakin.edu.au/hmnbs/nursing/awards/>

New safety device

Queensland based emergency department nurse and inventor, Glen Riverstone, was inspired to invent a safety device for opening glass ampoules after cutting his fingers numerous times.

Mr Riverstone has patented the *SNAPIT* device that saves nurses from using their fingers when opening the tops of ampoules. The broken lids remain in the reusable device until they are safely deposited into sharps bins.

Mr Riverstone, a graduate of Central Queensland University's School of Nursing and Health Studies, says his university studies taught him to think



Glen Riverstone with his *SNAPIT* invention

innovatively using a problem solving framework.

For more information contact glen@snapit.cpm.au