

An evaluation of mental health services in the Whyalla Hospital Accident and Emergency Department: a comparison of a new and old model of care.

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## Statement of Certification



This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the School Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

**Signed**.....

Debra Papoulis

**Date**.....30/11/2011

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## ABSTRACT

In January 2009 the first Mental Health Nurse Practitioner positions were rolled out in country South Australia, as a result of ongoing mental health reform at both commonwealth and state levels. This thesis reports on research comparing the practice model of a new Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Service, utilising a Mental Health Consultation Liaison model of care and an older, established, in-reach General Practitioner model, of mental health service delivery in a regional accident and emergency department in South Australia. The new Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Service is provided by a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (Candidate), who secured a position with Country Health SA when they were rolled out in 2009.

To answer the research question 'Does the Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Service improve mental health service delivery in the Accident and Emergency Department of the Whyalla Hospital?' a comparative descriptive study design utilising an empirical and analytical approach was employed. The study compares waiting times, admission rates and re-presentations to the accident and emergency department within 28 days of the original presentation. It also compares the incidence of consultation with other health professionals and the referral to community based mental health services taking place from the Accident and Emergency Department for the two models.

The results of the study are presented and represent significant statistical differences between the two models of care. The major findings of the study conclude engagement with the Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (Candidate) provides an opportunity for specialised comprehensive mental health assessment, timely therapeutic engagement and early intervention commenced in the Accident and Emergency Department. The high rate of consultation liaison from the Accident and Emergency Department as well as referral to community based mental health services is consistent with enhanced care co-ordination.

**Keywords:** Mental Health Nurse Practitioner; Mental Health Consultation Liaison; Mental Health; Model of Care; Accident and Emergency Department; Comparative Study.