



Coordinated medical and forensic and counselling response to patients who experience a recent sexual assault and present to an emergency department

Rationale:

This document is designed to ensure that appropriate medical, forensic and counselling care and support will be provided to a patient who has experienced a recent sexual assault and presents to an Emergency Department of a hospital.

Requirements:

When a person who has experienced a recent sexual assault presents to an Emergency Department of a hospital, it is the requirement of all hospitals to ensure provision of:

1. Medical care including injury assessment, emergency contraception and screening and prophylaxis for sexually transmitted infections.
2. A forensic examination in the event that the person may choose to report the matter to the police. A forensic examination is not therapeutic and should only be conducted after obtaining the informed consent of the person.
3. Counselling support by immediately contacting the regional sexual assault service to provide a counsellor or support person to attend with the patient throughout the course of the medical and forensic examination. This will ensure that follow up care and counselling support can be offered after the sexual assault.

Referral to a comprehensive sexual assault service that offers medical, forensic and counselling care, such as the Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) in Perth, is appropriate where such service exists.

Without a comprehensive medical and forensic examination, the person's access to the legal system would be severely compromised.

Doctors at SARC can be contacted on their 24-hour Emergency Line (08) 6458 1828 (metropolitan) or 1800 199 888 (free call) and can provide consultation and advice to doctors requesting assistance in conducting a medical and forensic examination.

Medical and forensic examination kits and a manual to guide doctors who assist the person who has experienced a recent sexual assault are available from SARC. All regional hospitals are advised to obtain the manual and kits for recent sexual assault emergency cases.

In the event that there is no regional sexual assault counselling service, SARC counsellors can be contacted on their 24-hour counselling line (08) 9340 1899 (metropolitan) or 1800 199 888 (free call) to advise and assist with the arrangements for the patient and provide where possible psychological support until alternative local arrangements can be made.

SARC doctors and counsellors are available to provide training to all relevant health service staff and this can be arranged by contacting their general administration on (08) 6458 1820.

The Child Protection Unit at Perth Children's Hospital can provide advice on the management of children under the age of 16 years and can be contacted on (08) 6456 4300. SARC provides services to people aged 13 years and over. Interagency referrals address the particular circumstances of children between the ages of 13 and 16 years.

Additional Information:

- SARC female and male forensic kits are available by phoning (08) 9340 1830.
- Medical responses to adults who have experienced sexual assault – an interactive education module for doctors, RANZCOG, final draft, 2004
- Management of recent sexual assault, information for metropolitan emergency departments, SARC, 2004

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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