



POLICY ON EARLY ACCESS TO DEFIBRILLATION FOR CARDIAC ARREST IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1 This document is a policy of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine and relates to the provision of early access to defibrillation of sudden cardiac arrest within health care settings.
- 1.2 The policy is applicable to all providers of clinical care and/or emergency response to collapsed persons within health care settings.
- 1.3 This policy is of relevance to
 - 1.3.1 Emergency Departments in general
 - 1.3.2 Committees charged with the responsibility of developing and evaluating contingencies for medical emergency and cardiac arrest management in the health care setting.

2 POLICY

- 2.1 In primary or cardiogenic sudden cardiac arrest, mortality increases in a non-linear fashion by 10% for each minute of delay in return of spontaneous circulation. Early access to defibrillation is the single most important intervention that has been demonstrated to save lives in collapsed persons suffering sudden cardiac arrest.
- 2.2 It is acknowledged that cardiac arrest in acute hospitals, other than in coronary care units, are often secondary and multifactorial in origin with consequently poorer survival rates.
- 2.3 The development of automated external defibrillators has placed timely defibrillation safely within the capability of all staff in health care settings.
- 2.4 The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine supports strategies to improve the ease of access to and use of automated external defibrillators (AED's) by all staff in health care settings.
- 2.5 AED's require paediatric algorithms if to be used on children/ AED's are not currently recommended for children less than 2 years of age.

3. PROCEDURE AND ACTIONS

- 3.1 All clinical staff within health care settings must be able to access and use either AED's or defibrillators equipped with AED capacity.
- 3.2 In ambulatory or non-acute health care settings, an AED, oxygen, suction and basic oxygen delivery equipment are considered as basic equipment items for emergency response.
- 3.3 All staff members designated to respond to collapsed persons require adequate training in contemporary resuscitation strategies in keeping with the scope of qualification and intended practice. Performance should be monitored and proficiency maintained.