



Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Ageing

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Our Ref: ADD/14/1978

Your Ref:

Ms Emily Pearson
Coroners Registrar
Coroner's Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition St
MELBOURNE VIC 3000



Dear Ms Pearson

Re: COR 2009 002156 Mr Matthew Spalding

I am pleased to advise you of the release of the Department of Health guideline, *Nursing Observation through engagement in inpatient care*. The development of the nursing observation guideline was a response to recommendations made from the Coroner's inquest in relation to Mr Spalding, as well as to recommendations made in the *Chief Psychiatrist's investigation of inpatient deaths 2008 - 2010*.

The guideline outlines the core principles of nursing observation, including its grounding in therapeutic engagement and interrelation with risk assessment, and articulates expectations of observation practices. It also details the role of nursing observation in relation to people's physical health, psychosocial functioning and ensuring people's safety on inpatient units.

The development of the guideline was underpinned by a comprehensive review of the literature and online survey distributed to nurses working in mental health inpatient settings. The development was supported by an external advisory group consisting of nursing, psychiatry, consumer and carer advocacy, academia and mental health service representatives.

The development of the nursing observation guideline addresses the absence of published standards relating to observations. It is expected that mental health services will develop local policies and procedures for nursing observations, linked to risk assessment, based on the guideline.

The guideline can be downloaded or ordered in hard copy through the Department of Health website (<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Nursing-observation-through-engagement-in-psychiatric-inpatient-care>). If you would like any further information about the nursing observation guideline, please contact Tracy Beaton, Chief Mental Health Nurse on 9096 7873 or Tracy.Beaton@health.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Dr Mark Oakley Browne
Director Clinical Quality & Safety and Chief Psychiatrist
Mental Health, Drugs and Regions Division

Attachments

1. Department of Health guideline *Nursing observation through engagement in psychiatric inpatient care*