

The triage and management of pregnant women in a Queensland emergency department: An action research study




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This study assessed the triage and management of pregnant women in a north Queensland emergency department (ED). Anecdotal evidence from midwives and emergency nurses indicated that pregnant women were not managed in a consistent manner when treated in the department and staff believed that pregnant women could be better managed.

The researcher worked collaboratively with hospital staff to improve care for pregnant women who presented to the department, and evaluated the effectiveness of strategies that were implemented. The research produced a better understanding of how pregnant women are assessed and managed in the ED and resulted in the development and implementation of better treatment protocols.

Nikki comes from a strong clinical background and understands the realities of working in a complex health system, which is why she chose a clinical problem to research. Her emergency nursing and midwifery background gave her the confidence to pursue research on a topic of this nature. It was important to Nikki to go beyond merely describing the problem; she wanted to work with clinical colleagues to develop a 'change to practice' that would directly benefit consumers and themselves. Nikki believes that given the right opportunity, it is possible for health professionals to make choices that will bring positive change for themselves and their clients. The research methodology that best fitted the topic, and Nikki's own philosophical position, was a critical participatory action research approach. Below is a diagrammatic illustration of the research design.

Strategies Implemented

- Support pamphlets for women following the loss of a baby
- Review and revision of existing protocols and resources
- In-service education for ED nurses and doctors on the management of pregnancy related complaints
- Implementation of 'the Emergency Triage Kit'
- Development of a triage flowchart for women who present with early pregnancy bleeding and a discharge information handout for women with bleeding in early pregnancy
- Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society resource folder and emergency support contact list
- Establishment of collaborative relationships between ED staff and midwifery and obstetric staff
- New gynaecological examination bed for the ED

The Action Research Cycle

