

Emergency Care Assessment and Treatment Program evaluation plan overview

Purpose and audiences

The Agency for Clinical Innovation is committed to evaluate the Emergency Care Assessment and Treatment (ECAT) program. This evaluation will:

- inform continuous improvement of the ECAT program as it is being implemented
- assess progress in achieving its intended outcomes
- determine what is needed to support sustainable ECAT protocol use.

The ECAT program is a multi-agency effort, relying on multiple components delivered by various NSW health agencies: ECAT protocols (ACI), implementation support (ACI), education and training (HETI) and electronic solutions (eHealth and/or LHD and SHNs). The evaluation has a whole-of-program scope, i.e. covering all program components, and an outcome focus.

The evaluation will provide timely evidence to support key decisions related to program improvement and sustainability.

The audience for the evaluation includes:

- ECAT program team and ACI Executive
- ECAT Executive Steering Committee and Evaluation Advisory Committee
- The Ministry System Performance and Purchasing Branch
- LHD and SHN ECAT teams and hospital executives
- HETI
- eHealth

Evaluation questions

The evaluation will seek to answer six overarching questions regarding appropriateness of protocols, program activities, nurse confidence, protocol uptake and variation, effectiveness, and sustainability of the ECAT program and protocol use.

- **How appropriate are the ECAT protocols to achieve the program objectives?**
- **How well has the program been implemented across its various components?**
 - Preparedness of local processes
 - Communication and engagement activities
 - Education program
 - Electronic solution

- **How have enabling factors influenced the implementation of the ECAT protocols?**
 - Awareness and engagement from key stakeholders
 - Confidence of emergency department (ED) nurses
- **Is there variation in the uptake of the ECAT protocols and what factors are affecting this?**
 - Variation across LHDs and SHNs
 - ED nurse use of protocols
- **How successful has the program been in improving the delivery of ED care?**
 - Safe, quality and appropriate ED care
 - Reduction in time to treatment and overall time in ED
 - Patient experience in NSW EDs
 - Transferability of ED nurses across NSW
- **How sustainable is the ECAT program in the NSW Health system?**
 - Sustained use of protocols
 - Cost savings over time and financial sustainability

Data sources and methods

The evaluation will use a combination of the methods and data sources described in table 1.

Table 1. Methods and data sources used in ECAT evaluation

Method	Focus	Timing
ED nurse online survey and focus groups	Attitudes, access, confidence, use, perceived support and outcomes for pre and post ECAT nurse-initiated care	Pre ECAT During implementation
ED medical online survey	Attitudes, support for and perceived outcomes for pre and post ECAT nurse-initiated care	Pre ECAT During implementation
ED nurse leader survey	Attitudes, support for, experience, processes and associated cost of nurse-initiated protocol education development pre ECAT	Pre ECAT
ED nurse leader focus groups	Attitudes, support for, experience, processes and associated cost of nurse-initiated protocol education development, safety and quality processes post ECAT	During implementation
Administrative and clinical data	Protocol and education uptake and coverage, time to treatment, ED length of stay, cost, safety and quality	During implementation

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