



Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia Incorporated (DANA)

Submission

Educating the Nurse of the Future

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DANA response to *Educating the Nurse of the Future*

The Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia is the peak body for nurses interested in alcohol and other drug nursing across Australia and New Zealand. DANA represents nurses and nurse practitioners working in alcohol and other drug settings, and nurses working with individuals with problematic alcohol and other drug use.

DANA provides this submission into *Educating the Nurse of the Future* in accordance with its position of advocating for educational content in recognising and responding to alcohol and other drug use to ALL nurses, regardless of practice setting.

Presently, alcohol and other drug use is a high driver of death and disability through overdose and comorbidity, both physical and psychological. There are substantial costs to the Australian community due to problematic alcohol and other drug use; these costs are by no means limited to illicit drugs, as prescription medication misuse is also a driver of hospital presentations. Nurses are likely to encounter individuals with problematic alcohol and other drug use in all areas they practice in and are in a unique position to identify and respond to problem alcohol and drug use due to their 'patient facing' roles.

DANA recommends that tertiary nursing education move beyond the optional inclusion of alcohol and other drug content and moves to incorporate, at a minimum, educational preparation in screening and referral for problematic alcohol and drug use. Such approaches utilised in other jurisdictions have seen promising results in early evaluation (Ann Mitchell's Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment **SBIRT**). Rather than arguments about an "overcrowded curriculum," or not being necessary in a "comprehensive degree," DANA argues that there can be no holistic care without the inclusion of alcohol and other drug education for nurses. DANA also argues that more effective nursing assessment and management of problematic alcohol and other drug use would arguably bring cost savings through early intervention and prevention.

DANA would like to see a paradigm shift in undergraduate nursing education whereby alcohol and other drug use is included in a curriculum that is truly holistic and recognises the

nursing role in treating, preventing and reducing harm from problematic alcohol and other drug use. Inclusion of such content to prepare nurses to address these issues would likely see benefit in addressing several issues related to problematic alcohol and other drug use.

For further information please contact:

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