

# ROLES OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT A SCOPING REVIEW

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## INTRODUCTION

Hospital volunteers carry out a variety of roles to improve patient experience in the emergency department (ED). Due to limited literature, volunteer services are often poorly guided, risking adverse impacts on overall patient experience of ED. A scoping review was conducted to examine the evolving roles of volunteers associated with improved patient satisfaction.

## METHODS

Published and grey literature were reviewed. The Cochrane, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Embase, PsycINFO, and Web of Science databases were searched using subject-headings and keywords. Articles meeting the 'Population-Concept-Context' criteria were retrieved; followed by data extraction and qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

14 studies (1 randomised trial, 1 case-control, 12 case studies; and 12 documents from the grey literature) were included. Five categories of volunteer roles were identified which include "Comfort Care", "Communication" and "Traffic Control", "Administration and Reporting", and "Practical Tasks"; of which the former three occurred most frequently (**Figure 1**). Most of the volunteer roles focused on the emergency department 'waiting room' and 'treatment room' (**Figure 2**). Studies that compared volunteer intervention care with conventional care (without volunteers) show improved patient satisfaction via T-test (1 study), Press-Ganey scores (1 study), % patient satisfaction (1 study) (**Table 1**). Remaining studies evaluated volunteer programs through patient and family feedback survey (11 studies). Grey literature suggests that there are five roles carried out in published studies which are not appropriate in Victorian emergency departments. They include washing or cleaning duties, making the patient bed, picking up pharmacy prescriptions, transporting laboratory specimen and transporting patients by wheelchairs.

FIGURE 1

### CATEGORIES OF VOLUNTEER ROLES and number of roles in each category

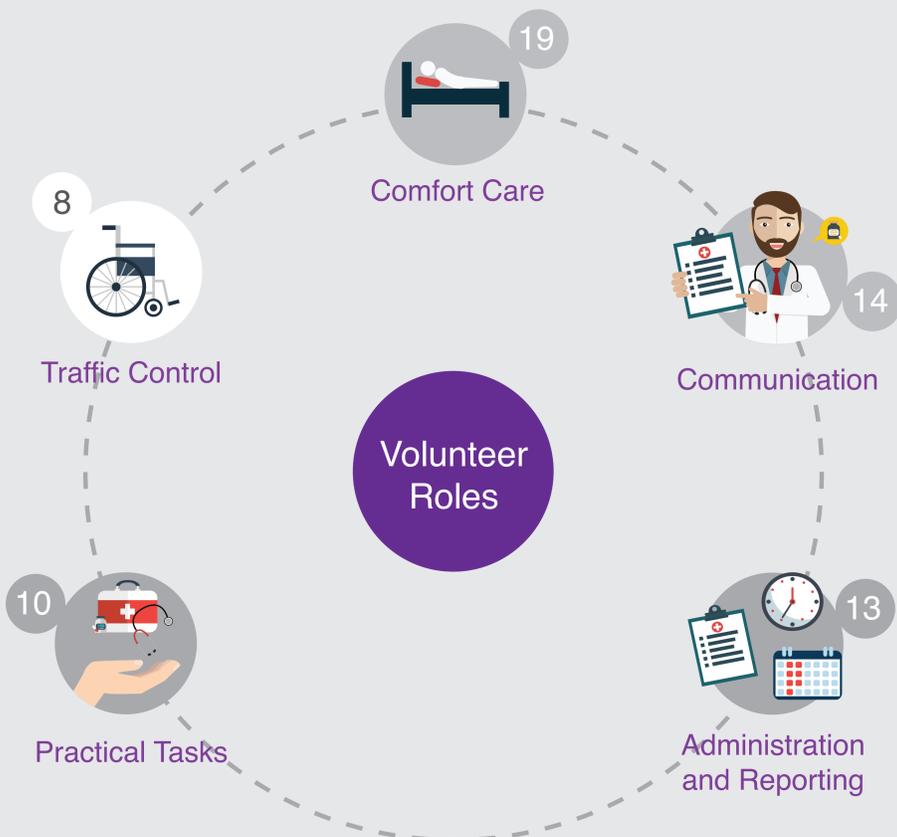


FIGURE 2

### VOLUNTEER ALLOCATION IN ED: ACTIVITY FREQUENCY

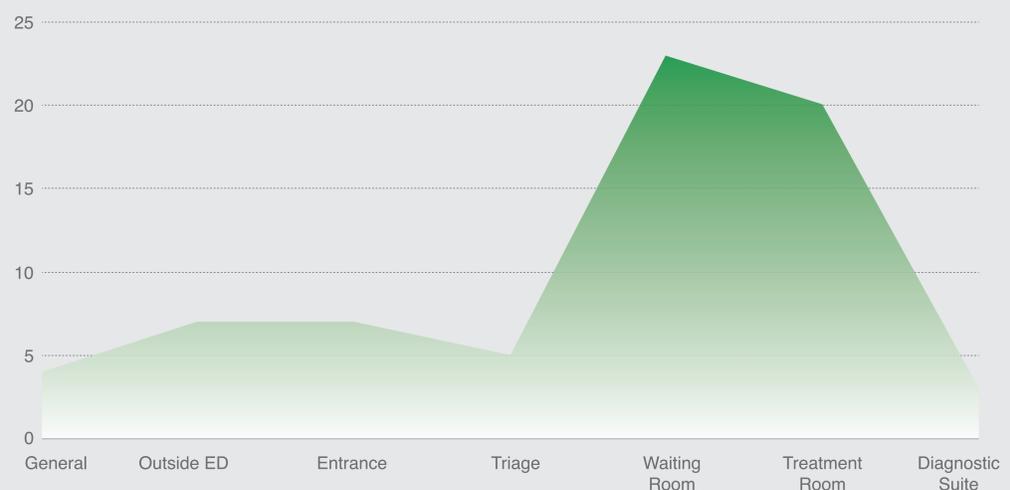


TABLE 1

### PATIENT SATISFACTION RESULTS

| NUMBER OF STUDIES | METHODS              | RESULTS / SCORE                                |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|
| 11 studies        | Survey questionnaire | Positive patient and family feedback           |
| 1 study           | T-test               | 4.24 $P < 0.05$ (intervention v. conventional) |
| 1 study           | Press-Ganey Tool     | 84.3% (from 76%)                               |
| 1 study           | Satisfaction survey  | 75% (double the conventional care)             |

## CONCLUSION

Most studies lacked scientific rigour. However, they commonly propose that volunteers be trained across five categories, and that ED locations devise appropriate role descriptions to enhance care and patient satisfaction.