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## POLICY ON FORENSIC TESTING AND EXAMINATION IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

### 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document is a policy of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine and relates to performing forensic medical examinations and the collection of forensic tissue samples within emergency departments.

The policy is applicable to emergency departments in general.

### 2. POLICY

- 2.1 The primary focus of an emergency department is the delivery of emergency medical care to the acutely ill and injured.
- 2.2 The routine collection of forensic evidence is not a core activity of emergency departments, and they should have arrangements in place around seeking advice from a local or regional forensic service.
- 2.3 Emergency physicians should be aware of the principles of preservation and collection of forensic evidence and work with forensic practitioners to achieve the best patient outcomes.
- 2.4 Contemporaneous documentation of all injuries should be made to assist with potential judicial process recognising that there may be significant clinical delays.
- 2.5 Clinical care takes precedent over forensic considerations.
- 2.6 Standard operating procedures for collection of forensic evidence in Emergency Departments must be appropriately resourced by the requesting agency, including evidentiary procedures and court attendance.
- 2.7 Victims of sexual assault have the right to access an appropriately trained forensic practitioner.
- 2.8 Emergency department staff need to be aware of ethical issues involved in forensic cases such as breaching confidentiality. Formal processes must be adhered to when furnishing reports to the Police or legal authorities.

### 3. PROCEDURES AND ACTIONS

- 3.1 Emergency departments should have procedures in place for referral of victims of sexual assault to appropriate services
- 3.2 Emergency departments should have formal arrangements in place with the Police regarding the management of individuals suspected of "body packing" drug smuggling.

#### **4. DATES AND NOTES**

*Approved by Council:*                      *July 2005*

*Last reviewed and approved:*        *March 2011*

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