



Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

Position Statement

Health and Human Rights

1. Purpose and Scope

This document is a position statement of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM; the College) and relates to health and human rights. It is applicable to all ACEM members and represents a standard for our membership to uphold and maintain.

2. Position

ACEM supports the inherent dignity and worth, and the equal and inalienable rights of all people. [1] Through our commitment to the principle of equity, we advocate for health equity for all people globally.

The College recognises that 'the right to health' requires equitable access to a variety of health services of appropriate quality to reach the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. [1,2] Everybody is entitled to timely, accessible, and quality care regardless of any distinction of any kind, such as race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, class, or socioeconomic status. [1,2]

Alongside the right to healthcare access, people also have the right to make health decisions for themselves. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that this includes 'the right to control one's health and body, including sexual and reproductive freedom, and the right to be free from interference, such as the right to be free from torture, non-consensual medical treatment, and experimentation and control over their bodies.' [2]

3. Key Components of Care

The ACEM [Policy on Public Health \(P56\)](#) highlights the importance of EDs in promoting the health and wellbeing of the community. S881 has been created to universalise ACEM's approach to human rights within healthcare.

3.1 Timely Care

Timely care reduces mortality and morbidity outcomes for the patient. This is particularly vital in the context of emergency care. [3]

3.2 Accessible Care

Accessible care reduces health inequities based on social determinants such as location, cost, and availability of specialist healthcare professionals. Emergency care is essential for all people but should not be a replacement for other forms of healthcare. Factors such as lack of resourcing and/or issues of prioritisation can lead to reduced access to care through discrimination. [4]

3.3 Safety and Quality Care

A culture focused on safety and quality is fundamental to the provision of the highest standard of emergency care, and to ensuring that patient concerns about their health are listened to and their needs addressed. [5-7]

3.4 Participate in Healthcare Decisions

The human right to participate in healthcare decisions is important at both the systemic level, such as through public consultations and health infrastructure planning, and the individual level, such as through maintaining patient autonomy, including during emergency care. This includes ensuring the patient is appropriately educated on their condition and their treatment options and can make informed decisions about their health. [5]

4. Related ACEM Documents

[P28 Policy on Quality Framework for EDs](#)

[P31 Policy on Patients Right to Access ED Care](#)

[P55 Policy on Components of an Emergency Medicine Consultation](#)

[P56 Policy on Public Health](#)

5. References

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights [Internet]. United Nations. [cited 25 August 2022]. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
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5. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) [Internet]. United Nations. 2022 [cited 25 August 2022]. Available from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>
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