**Rationale**
The development of this online resource is informed by research that clearly demonstrates the importance of communication in emergency health contexts and the current lack of opportunities for medical and nursing students to learn about communication in an Emergency Department (ED) environment.

This resource reflects the complexity and specific communication demands within the Emergency Department and other high stress, high-risk settings through authentic patient and clinician stories. The scripts used in this resource are based on authentic data collected during the Emergency Communication research project and provide students with an opportunity to follow real-life scenarios through all stages of the Emergency Department journey. The resource provides an opportunity for students to learn communication by watching other people communicate, and by having opportunities to communicate.

This resource is informed by adult teaching and learning principles as well as language principles and is inter-professional as both nursing and medical students can do the same modules and activities. It provides opportunities for the application of good communication practices and reflects the culture and diversity in the ED environment. The activities in this resource allow students to reflect on strategies for interprofessional and team work. The resource is suitable for both classroom and online self-access use. Opportunities are provided for students to be assessed at specific points throughout the resource.

**Introduction to the online resource**
This resource is designed to allow educators and students flexibility in their approach to using the resource and completing activities. There are several discrete sections, which provide a range of options for student exploration and interaction in an emergency environment. The patient journey is broken down into four stages – Triage, Admission, Assessment and Management. Students are able to explore several pathways throughout the resource.

A horizontal pathway follows the journey of patient, Ewan Levinson, as he progresses through an Emergency Department environment from Triage and Admission through to Assessment and Management. As students follow Ewan’s progress they will learn more about these stages and the communication challenges each stage presents. Ewan's ED journey is made up of both online and extension activities that can be completed in classroom or in an individual learning environment.
An alternate vertical pathway focuses on two patients, Marlina and Ken, at different stages of their journey through the Emergency Department. We initially meet Marlina in Admission and see her again at the Management stage while we first meet Ken in Triage and again in the Assessment stage. This structure allows students to follow the pathway a patient may take through ED but also to look more deeply into particular stages of the Emergency Department journey, depending on their professional and educational area of interest.

The online tasks and extension activities follow the communication strategies outlined in the ED communication framework and focus on issues such as ‘Developing shared knowledge and shared decision making with the patient’ and ‘Repeating key information, checking and tracking questions and comments’.

**Online Tasks**
These provide opportunities for students to listen, watch and interact in an online environment with immediate feedback provided to students. These tasks often occur after an audio or video clip and students are expected to be complete the tasks individually although they could also work together in pairs. The online tasks aim to the raise awareness of the nature of the ED and address specific communication issues and challenges in particular stages of the journey. Students may be asked to order a sequence, note a response or select a correct answer but responses to tasks are not saved for assessment.

**Extension Activities**
These occur at the end of online segments or independently and feature both classroom and workbook activities including reflection exercises, role-plays, workbook tasks, group discussions and larger assignments and projects. Extension tasks aim to encourage students to reflect more deeply on the online scenarios and to make connections between the communication features presented, their own practices and those of others. Students are offered opportunities for writing or speaking about communication in emergency contexts as well as the application of communication strategies.

**Note:** For a full description of the online and extension activities that appear in this resource, download the ‘Description of activities’ PDF on the For Educators pages.
Using the activities

Experiential Learning
Activities in this resource are designed with the aim of producing meaningful learning experiences by involving participants. Some activities will trigger reflection on previous experiences while other activities will encourage learners to practice interpersonal skills.

- Learning through experience is an effective way to incorporate interpersonal skills into professional behavior.
- Placing the learner in a ‘real-life’ situation/experience is an effective way for participants to understand interpersonal skills.
- Using experiential activities, a theoretical understanding of interpersonal skills is developed, along with the technical knowledge of how to employ those skills.
- The majority of provided activities are most effective for learning groups when conducted by a knowledgeable and sensitive learning facilitator.
- The learning facilitator should have an understanding of the theoretical concepts
- The facilitator needs to be able to process learning experiences in order to make connections between one-off experiences and broader theoretical concepts. In this way, experiential learning is inductive, rather than deductive.
- Processing is a vital part of experiential learning because it enables learners to gain personal meaning from experiences, in addition to understanding theoretical concepts.
- In processing experiences, facilitators should:
  - Respond to the discussion
  - Gather ideas together
  - Encourage reflection
  - Make theoretical connections.
- The most effective facilitators will use an experience-based approach to learning.
- Facilitators are most productive when they are knowledgeable about experiential learning.

---

1 This material is taken from: Stein-Parbury, J. 2009, **Patient and Person: Interpersonal Skills in Nursing**, Elsevier, Sydney, Australia.
Suggestions for Facilitators of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning activities may produce active responses from participants, or they may fall flat. The following are some general suggestions to handle some of the common difficulties that may arise when using experience-based learning:

• Facilitator of learning through experience should relinquish procedural approaches when teaching interpersonal skills, and allow learners to develop their own personally relevant meaning from the experience.
• Rather than being an expert on how the activity ‘should’ be done, the facilitator should act as a guide for participants on a journey.
• As a general rule, the facilitator should not leave the room while participants engage in an activity – participants often require further guidance and assistance.
• By ‘floating’ around the room during discussions, the facilitator can ensure that instructions for the activity are understood.
• It can be useful to ask general questions such as ‘What’s happening here?’ or ‘What’s going on?’ when an activity or its discussion is floundering – the facilitator may gauge if participants are responding to events other than activity.
• When there is ‘nothing happening’, the activity should be abandoned for that particular learning group – however the facilitator should not abandon activity altogether, as it may trigger significant learning for other learning groups.
• Participants may seem hesitant to engage in an activity – ensure the instructions are understood, as reluctance may indicate a failure to comprehend what is expected.
• By assuming the participant’s goodwill, the facilitator can build trust.

To engage participants in a classroom activity or discussion, a ‘warm-up’ activity is a useful way to get participants focused and ready to learn. Some examples suggested by Stein-Parbury (2009) of warm-up activities include:

• **Word association.** Ask participants to say the first word that comes to their mind in response to the theme of the discussion – for example, grief.
• **Brainstorm.** Gather as many ideas as possible about any given topic – for example, listening.
• **Touch base.** Ask each participant to state how they feel at that moment.
• **Tell a story.** Share a personal story or anecdote about the discussion topic.
• **Show a picture.** Show a picture that portrays an aspect that is appropriate to the session.

In order to be effective, warm-up activities should generally take no longer than ten minutes to complete.
Role Play
Role playing, a process of acting out a situation as if it were real, is a commonly used experiential learning method.

Guidelines for Role Play
• Participant’s willingness to behave in unfamiliar ways is crucial.
• Facilitator should present this information to learners as each role play activity is introduced.
• Essential that role play participants are presented with the following guidelines.

Before the Action
1. Take a few minutes before to assume the role. Avoid letting personal feelings about the role interfere with your representation of the role. Remember that the aim of the activity is to enhance learning.
2. The aim of the role play is to act naturally, even though you may need to assume a stance that is unfamiliar. There is no need for concern if you believe you cannot enact the role because you are not good at performing.
3. Once role is assumed, allow the action to flow naturally. It is not necessary to exaggerate your actions to be a ‘good’ role player.
4. During the role play, make up information about yourself or the situation as needed, in order to keep the action going.
5. During the role play, it is acceptable to change your attitudes and ideas as they may change from the prescribed script as a result of the progress of the action.

After the Action
1. Take a few minutes to discuss how you felt in your role, and how you responded to the role.
2. Ensure you clarify any information that was fabricated in an effort to keep the action going.
3. Discuss any concerns you have about what other participants in the role play may think or feel about you as a result of your assumed role.
4. When appropriate, state aloud that you are returning to who you really are, and that you are no longer in the role.