

# Emergency nurses' scope of practice – Who says I can't?

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We do it to each other, it's corrosive to our self esteem, and it erodes our autonomy. You have probably been a victim if not a perpetrator of those challenging words, "Its not policy here to <enter any skill >" or "you cant do that until you've been signed off". Experienced nurses seem to cop it whenever they work in a new facility. Some hospitals are worse than others, but the overt restriction to perform a commonly used skill, and challenge of scope faced by competent nurses in this country is a cancer eating away at our productivity, and it needs to be brought to a forum.

Case in point: After an experienced remote emergency nurse and her family moved to a larger regional town, she sought casual work in an ED local to her new home. This day she was 4 sutures into a 7 suture closure, when another nurse sought to challenge her practice (in front of the patient). Having sutured as part of her skill set for many years, Tanya was perplexed that in the middle of the task, a colleague decided to try and tell her that she "couldn't suture here". On questioning this, Tanya's colleague simply said that it's against policy..... Well then it started.

This presentation will explain in the simplest of terms a few truths about the Scope of Practice of an emergency nurse, NMBA's view and how any ED nurse can interrogate their own skill set, to determine if what they are doing at work is acceptable. Using a simple five dot point checklist, any nurse can assess whether indeed they can or cant suture, cannulate, perform ECGs, administer IV medication, access a PICC line, insert arterial lines, care for ventilated patients, manually defibrillate, administer drugs without an order and a billion other tasks that are elements in our scope of practice. Tanya's story will be told, and we will look at the decision process for Tanya's scope.

The presentation will be bold and revealing, and is more about teamwork, and collegial respect that its title implies. It wont be filled with research, but it will issue straight forward principles that we as nurses need to remind ourselves of.

Attend this session or don't attend this session, but do one thing when you are next told "*its against the policy*", ask "which policy?"