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*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.
SA Health is introducing a new Nurse Endoscopist Model of Care to South Australian public hospitals. The ‘Nurse Endoscopist Project’ will see three nurses trained to perform colonoscopy. The Project is being conducted at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital for 12 months from July 2017.

Who are Nurse Endoscopists?

Nurse Endoscopists are experienced registered nurses specially trained to perform colonoscopy under the supervision of a specialist consultant. The doctor has overall responsibility for patient care. However, with the patient’s consent the doctor will ask the nurse to perform colonoscopies that are straightforward and not complex. Training nurses to be able to provide this type of care is an important part of improving our health care system.

Why do we need Nurse Endoscopists?

Bowel cancer is the second most commonly diagnosed cancer; however it can be treated in 90% of cases if detected early. With the introduction of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, more people are coming forward for screening and the demand for colonoscopy is growing.

What other countries use Nurse Endoscopists as part of their health system?

Nurse Endoscopists have been around for many years in Europe, North America and China. Although the model is new to South Australia, both Victoria and Queensland have successfully introduced their own training programs in the last few years. There is a lot of evidence to show that nurses can perform colonoscopies to the same standard as doctors.

What training will advanced practice Nurse Endoscopists undergo?

Patient safety is of utmost importance. The training program lasts for at least 12 months and the nurses will undertake university education to develop a higher level of clinical knowledge. They will also receive hands-on practical training in the use of equipment and performing the colonoscopy. Each nurse is closely supervised by consultant surgeons at all times and is assessed along the way.

What other duties will Nurse Endoscopists perform?

The role of Nurse Endoscopists goes beyond just performing colonoscopy. They will lead all aspects of the patient journey from assessment in outpatients through to colonoscopy and follow up.

What are the benefits of advanced practice nurse endoscopy?

Having specially trained nurses performing colonoscopies means real benefits to patients and public health services. These benefits include:

- Improved access to services for suitable patients
- Medical specialists are freed up to care for more complex cases
- The Nurse Endoscopist role will help current services to work better and most importantly, improve patient care.

More colonoscopies will be performed.

How capable will the Nurse Endoscopists be to perform colonoscopies?

Nurse Endoscopists will be trained to the same level of skill as is expected of medical endoscopists. They will also maintain their practical skills and clinical knowledge in order to continue working in the role.