

Allied health assistances in cardiorespiratory and paediatrics physiotherapy.

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Allied health assistants (AHAs) have generally occupied generic roles within allied health disciplines. The paediatric and cardiorespiratory (paed/cardio) AHA role is a new Grade 3 AHA specialty role, with specific training and competencies within physiotherapy at Monash Medical Centre. This paper describes the job role and the process from the AHA perspective over a six month period.

The Cardiorespiratory service has a growing scope for allied health assistance. AHA led interventions included:

- Increased therapy time for patients with Cystic Fibrosis, with therapy sessions twice daily on admissions for a gym session and airway clearance
- Training in Intensive Care Unit (ICU) assisting with tracheostomies and endotracheal tube to competently closed circuit suction system patients
- Assisting the physiotherapist with mobilising ventilated patients and completing second treatments of bed/chair exercises with these patients.

The associated competencies completed and that were created specifically for the Cardiorespiratory AHA role were:

- Airway clearance
- Mobility with oxygen
- Closed circuit suction system
- Exercise testing

The Cardiorespiratory physiotherapy service had a clear understanding of where this role could be developed and to expand the duties

The Paediatric element of the AHA role was in hydrotherapy and mobility patient on the wards. Future scope of this role is to include having an AHA outpatient lists, and seeing patients preoperative in orthopedics.

Competencies created for paediatric were:

- Gait aid prescription
- AHA –led hydrotherapy session
- Casting

Having an allied health assistant trained and working in specific areas such as cardiorespiratory and paediatric will decrease the time a physiotherapist needs to spend time with these patient types and focus on more critically ill patients. With more work and development of these two areas this could assist with better patient outcomes and increase scope of practice for grade 3 allied health assistants.