

Core Competencies for Emergency Cardiac Care

All nurses must be competent in all aspects of BLS (CPR and use of automatic external defibrillator [AED]).

All nurses must have a commitment to ongoing professional development and awareness of own learning needs.

Additional competencies for emergency cardiac care (not all competencies are required for all types of assessment and intervention):

Use of supraglottic adjuncts (e.g., laryngeal mask airway [LMA], Combitube, laryngeal tube, e.g. King Airway)

Bag/mask ventilation with and without oropharyngeal or nasopharyngeal airways for airway management and respiratory support

Establishment and maintenance of cardiac monitoring

Interpretation of cardiac rhythm using a rhythm strip

Establishment of vascular access (intravenous or intraosseous)

Administration and monitoring effects of medications used in emergency cardiac care

Provision of care to families in crisis

Effective communication with colleagues

Levels

Competencies that apply to all nurses who are expected to respond to patients experiencing cardiac emergencies are indicated as “Level A”

Competencies that are related to providing care using cardiac monitoring or emergency medications are indicated as “Level CM/D”

Level	Knowledge	Skill	Judgement or Reasoning	Attitude
Assessment				
A	Normal airway anatomy and function, normal breathing and circulation patterns Abnormal airway, breathing and circulation patterns and causes (CM/D)	Assessing airway patency, respiratory difficulty, presence and quality of pulse, capillary refill and level of consciousness	Determining change from patient's baseline, if possible Considering possible factors contributing to abnormal findings Determining adequacy of blood pressure/oxygenation	
CM/D	Normal cardiac rhythm	Recognizing normal sinus rhythm		
CM/D	Cardiac arrhythmias	Systematically interpreting ECG rhythm to detect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ventricular fibrillation • asystole • ventricular tachycardia • supraventricular tachycardia • bradycardia • A-V blocks • ST-segment deviation (continuous computerized ST-segment monitoring <i>encouraged</i>) Recognizing life-threatening rhythms Establishing and maintaining reliable cardiac monitoring	Determining changes from patient's presenting baseline Integrating assessment findings with ECG findings	

	Knowledge	Skill	Judgement or Reasoning	Attitude
Organisation, Coordination and Provision of Care in Emergent Situations				
A CM/D	Effect of inadequate oxygenation and ventilation (due to respiratory compromise) on other organs	Recognition of respiratory distress, failure or arrest, and inability to protect airway Administration of oxygen Safe and correct placement of supraglottic airway device (e.g. LMA, CombiTube, King®)	Selection of appropriate airway adjuncts (e.g. suction, oropharyngeal airway insertion, nasopharyngeal insertion, positioning)	
CM/D	Mechanisms of defibrillation Hazards of defibrillation	Safe operation of manual defibrillator and/or AED (depending on equipment available)	Evaluating effectiveness of CPR; evaluating effectiveness of defibrillation	Commitment to ongoing professional development Self-awareness re: own learning needs
CM/D	Principles of IV therapy	Establishing and monitoring IV access	Assessing fluid balance	
CM/D	Principles of intraosseous access	Establishing and monitoring intraosseous access		
CM/D	Mechanisms of action and side effects of selected medications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • epinephrine • lidocaine • amiodarone • atropine 	Safe administration of selected medications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • epinephrine • lidocaine • amiodarone • atropine 	Evaluating effects of medications	Commitment to ongoing professional development Self-awareness re: own learning needs

	Knowledge	Skill	Judgement or Reasoning	Attitude
Communication and Documentation				
A	Agency documentation tools and policies	Accurate, concise and timely documentation		
A	Principles of therapeutic communication	Establishment of therapeutic relationship with family or significant others in a very short time frame, during a crisis situation Effective communication with colleagues during an emergency situation	Evaluating families' responses to crisis and need for further intervention	Promoting family presence as soon as possible Involving family in decisions as much as possible
A	Theories of coping and responses to crisis		Evaluating need for further intervention/support for family	Respecting patients' and families' cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices related to illness, crisis and death
A	Theories of grief and grieving			
A	Legislation and agency guidelines regarding advance directives	Effective techniques for inquiring about and discussing advanced directives with family members and colleagues	Identifying appropriate time to ask about patients' wishes or directives	Respecting patients' and families' wishes