

1.1.1B Triage

Triage is the process of prioritising sick or injured people for treatment according to the seriousness of the condition or injury. In general practice, frontline staff play a vital role in determining the priority of need for each patient, whether in person or on the telephone. Reception staff in particular must be aware of triage procedures in the practice, and be able to obtain medical advice from a GP or nurse where necessary.

RACGP 4th Edition Standards

1.1.1B/ *Our practice can demonstrate how we identify, prioritise and respond to life threatening and urgent medical matters (triage).*

Assessment methods

- Interview with GPs and staff

Surveyors will interview the GPs, nurses and administrative staff, who should be able to demonstrate the triage processes used at the practice.

- Documentation review

Ideally, surveyors will see triage resources, such as triage wall charts, displayed in the reception area, and other areas where staff might answer the phone.

Meeting the Standards

It's important that all staff at the practice understand and are able to confidently describe how different patients' needs are managed. This includes handling urgent situations, and staff must be trained in triage processes, and be able to demonstrate how they identify and manage urgent medical matters, including when the practice is operating at full capacity (e.g. when the appointment schedule is fully booked).

It is not appropriate for a receptionist to place a caller on hold before asking the caller if he or she may do so. This assumes any called might be a patient in need of urgent attention.

Best practice

Ideally, the practice's policies and procedures manual will describe triage processes, and include any resources used at the practice. In addition, practice induction/orientation programs should include training in the triage process, including how to effectively use the system. All staff will regularly update their CPR and other first aid skills. Practice meetings could be used for such training, with the use of role-plays or actual scenarios that have happened.