

Lay Summary:

What is important for patient safety when GPs work in or alongside emergency departments?

Increasing pressure on emergency departments in hospitals (EDs) has led to GPs working within or alongside emergency doctors to help to cope with the demand. Different ways of working have developed but we don't know enough about how this may affect safety for patients being treated in the ED. This research aimed to look at how potential patient safety risks could be prevented when GPs work in or alongside emergency departments.

We visited 13 EDs using different models for working with GPs. Information was collected using observations, recorded staff interviews and local patient safety reports. These are the records kept when something happens that could have or did cause harm to a patient.

This information was then examined and used to answer these questions:

- What was the situation surrounding any event that did or could have caused harm to the patient?
- What were the procedures or processes which allowed it to happen?
- What was the outcome for the patient?

The answers to these questions were then used to develop theories about how and why a patient safety event might occur and how it was thought safer care could be delivered.

Some of the ideas of how to ensure safer care were:

- Have an experienced nurse in charge of selecting which patients saw which doctors. Provide the nurse with locally developed guidance and early warning scores to help them make the right decisions.
- Be clear about whether the GP is expected to work like a traditional GP or an emergency doctor. Make sure there are clear processes in place to support them in this role.
- Strong clinical leadership from ED doctors and GPs to encourage good teamwork and communication with colleagues and services.

The results from this research can be used to look more closely at the human factors that will underpin good practice for this complex care setting.

(308 words)