Climbing the emergency nursing career lattice

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The Orange Health Services (OHS) Emergency Department (ED) like most rural centres had a history of high utilisation of agency staff and high turnover of permanent staff, which has led to high variance within practical skills and competence. So ED decided to form a working party to develop a lattice system to frame the education, competency structure and support the staff career progression.

The working party decided to develop a lattice system, combining both theoretical and practical competence testing, within a self-directed learning package, utilising various modes of learning including readings, worksheets, competencies and in-services. A pilot phase was initiated in October 2012 using the CNUMs and other senior staff as test subjects, to review the packages and processes within the department. This process acted as a quality improvement process to identify in-consistencies prior to releasing the package to all staff in December 2012.

Each staff member was given an encrypted USB in accordance with NSW Health guidelines, which contained the initial package one, comprising of a competency booklet, a workbook with theory based questions and all readings from which the information had been derived for their information. To ensure consistency in both approach and delivery the assessment of competencies were developed and applied by Cert IV Training and Assessment qualified staff within the ED.