

2012

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Recommended Citation

Wyatt, A. (2003). “Professionalism”. *Australasian Journal of Paramedicine*, 1(3).
Retrieved from <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/jephc/vol1/iss3/27>

This Conference Proceeding is posted at Research Online.
<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/jephc/vol1/iss3/27>

Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care

An International eJournal of Prehospital Care Research, Education, Clinical Practice, Policy and Service Delivery

ACAP Conference Abstracts 2003

Abstract No. 990056-26

"PROFESSIONALISM"

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The issue of professional registration of paramedics is both topical and controversial. It is therefore timely that the many issues concerning registration are raised and discussed in open forums. This paper will examine the issues from the academic perspective.

A discussion of what is meant by 'registration' will lead to an overview of what is happening in other professions within Australia, and also what is happening within the paramedic profession internationally. These trends will be explored in light of the changing context of paramedic practice within Australia.

What does registration mean to the profession and what are the advantages and disadvantages involved in the introduction of registration? What impact, if any, will registration have on the paramedic and their practice? Is there a value-added benefit to be gained from registration over the existing situation?

The academic interest in these discussions arises from a number of perspectives. State or national guidelines that outline the standard of professional practice will need to be established, and academic institutions accredited to conduct courses that meet this standard. Similarly, there will need to be formal recognition and accreditation of continuing education programs. Who will bear the responsibility for such accreditations? Who will endorse the standards? What is the best academic model and infrastructure to support registration? Who will bear the ultimate responsibility for the practicing paramedic?

The paper will conclude by perhaps introducing more questions than it has managed to answer, however the purpose is to address the issues. The ultimate focus of professional registration must be to protect the community – will registration lead to this?