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Going Global: Medical Assistance and Flight Nursing

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Air travel is becoming increasingly more common and accessible to all, bringing with it the complexities of how to manage illness or accident while away from home. Nursing plays a critical role in the provision of medical assistance and enabling patients to optimise their medical care in different international healthcare settings.

Standards of care vary greatly from country to country and having medical oversight of the care being provided is essential to optimise treatment and clinical outcomes. Patients may often require more complex care than can be provided locally or, because of a change in their core functional abilities, they may need in-flight medical assistance to be able to travel home. Determining patients' fitness to travel requires a complex risk-assessment and decision-making process.

Flight nursing is a complex and challenging specialist field of nursing which focuses on ensuring that all medical, logistical and aviation considerations are properly addressed so that patients can be delivered safely home. Flight nurses are able to provide and deliver suitable levels of care in the challenging

flight environment. It is their responsibility to see that patients receive safe, effective and high-quality care during their transport via aircraft, as well as addressing the significant logistical and geographical difficulties involved in managing a safe transfer.

This presentation explores these challenges and the role of a flight nurse in ensuring safe patient transfers across international boundaries.

Speaker Biography

Kerryn McGowran is the Director of Nursing – Assistance, EMEA at International SOS London. Since joining International SOS 13 years ago, Kerryn has held progressively more senior roles in medical assistance with experience working on and managing both corporate and Government contracts. She has extensive practical experience as a flight nurse transferring patients on commercial airlines for the company, and developing the medical transportation process. In her current role she is responsible for the professional leadership of a large team of nursing staff across Europe, Middle East and Africa. Originally from Australia, Kerryn has a Bachelor of Science - Nursing from Curtin University, and has a strong background in emergency care and hospital based medicine. She also holds a Diploma in Tropical Nursing from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Kerryn is Deputy Chair for the Royal College of Nursing Critical care and inflight nursing forum, which supports nurses working within critical care and aviation medicine nationally.

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