

Emergency Department (ED)

Whitefish, MT

About our Emergency Department (ED):

- **How many beds:** 11 beds including 2 for resuscitation/trauma
- **Patient demographics:** We serve a variety of patient demographics including both adults and children. We have approximately 11,000 patient visits each year. Logan Health Whitefish Emergency Department is a Level 4 trauma center designated by the State of Montana.
- **Schedules and call requirements:** We schedule eight weeks at a time. Full time and part time staff have set schedules with PRN staff filling in for vacation time and open shifts. Full time staff work every other weekend. In our department we have three groups of shifts, days, mid shifts, and nights. Day shift is 0645 to 1915, normal mid shift times are 1100 and 1400 (these times can vary), night shift is 1845-0715. There are no on-call requirements for the emergency department.

Common treatments:

Pneumonia, nonspecific chest pain, acute cerebrovascular disease, CHF (non-hypertensive), lower respiratory disease, gastrointestinal hemorrhage, cardiac dysrhythmias, respiratory failure, septicemia, fluid and electrolyte disorders, COPD-bronchiectasis, acute myocardial infarction, coronary atherosclerosis and other heart disease, diabetes mellitus with complications, intracranial injury, poisoning by other medications and drugs, abdominal pain, syncope, UTI, mood disorders, skin and subcutaneous infection, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, alcohol related disorders, malaise and fatigue, fever of unknown origin.

Common skill sets/procedures:

Maintaining accurate patient assessments, thinking and acting quickly, prioritizing effectively, remaining calm under pressure, developing coping methods, learning to deescalate situations, play well on the team, communicate effectively, remaining flexible, and being great educators.

Arterial blood gasses, arterial line set ups, bag mask ventilation, bladder catheterization, burn



debridement, cardioversion/defibrillation, assisting with closed reduction fracture, external cardiac pacing, assisting with lumbar puncture, nasogastric tube placement, assisting with intubation, intraosseous access, intravenous access and fluid administration, medication administration, assisting with nasal cauterization and packing, procedural sedation and analgesia, assist with reduction dislocation, pediatric and adult resuscitation, splinting, and assisting with thoracotomy.

Qualities of a Emergency Department (ED) nurse:

Emergency nurses must quickly assess incoming patients and prioritize care based on need, available staffing, and patient acuity. They work as part of a team and often initiate treatment while waiting for the physician to come and evaluate the patient.

5 qualities to be a successful Emergency Department (ED) nurse:

- 1. A strong professional and emotional foundation:** You'll need to be ready to spend long hours on your feet and move and lift patients when necessary. Nurses should have a strong disposition and be able to detach yourself emotionally to some degree when treating patients who may be critically ill or injured.
- 2. Clinical skills:** ED nurses need to perform their duties swiftly and efficiently to prevent delays in care and to protect their patients. A high level of skill is needed to perform treatments and therapies and to immediately recognize important changes in a patient's condition. Patient assessment is another vitally important skill, with the ability to interpret labs and other diagnostic information in relation to the patient condition.
- 3. A calm attitude:** Performing emergency nursing procedures in a sometimes-chaotic environment calls for being able to keep a level head to follow instructions from physicians and other ER providers. Loud noises, quick directives and high tensions can be present. Learning to remain calm and continue to perform your ER duties is something you must master with time.
- 4. Learning to be assertive:** Emergency nursing skills encompass more than just administering IVs or finishing your charting quickly. While practical ER nursing skills are essential, learning when and how to speak up is important to your role as well. Oftentimes, you will be the only advocate your patient has. Learning how to voice concerns or ideas, especially to other professions, is part of the job.
- 5. Flexibility:** Patient needs can change quickly, and you must be able to respond immediately to those changes. You may need to accompany a ventilator patient to x-ray, then come back and start an IV on a person with fragile veins. The mix of patients in the emergency department can also change from minute to minute. As a ED nurse, you will need to keep all the changes straight to prevent medication errors and other problems.