



# POSITION STATEMENT ÉNONCÉ

Nurses Association of New Brunswick • L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Nouveau-Brunswick

## PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick believes that nurses have a key role in collaborating with other stakeholders to develop and maintain a primary health care delivery system in an effort to make the benefits of primary health care a reality for the citizens of New Brunswick.

Primary health care should not be confused with primary nursing or primary care, but the terms are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Currently, **primary nursing** is referred to as a system of delivering nursing service, mainly in the institutional setting, where the nurse assumes responsibility for planning and assuring comprehensive 24-hour care for individual clients (Stockert & Smadu, 2006, pp. 151-152). **Primary care** is generally thought of as being illness oriented with emphasis on medical diagnosis, treatment and follow-up (World Health Organization [WHO], 1985, p.1).

In contrast, **primary health care** “ is essential health care made universally accessible to the community, by means acceptable to them, through their full participation and at a cost the community and country can afford” (WHO, 1978; WHO, 2003). Primary health care cannot be broken down into discrete parts, but must be considered as a whole, dynamic process (Health Canada, 2006).

Incorporated into this process are five key principles of primary health care:

1. Essential health care includes five components: health promotion, disease prevention, restoration, rehabilitation and support.
2. Health care is equally accessible (financially, culturally, functionally and geographically) to all.
3. Maximum individual, family and community involvement in the needs identification, assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of health care and services is necessary.
4. Appropriate methods and technology that are acceptable to the client: procedures, techniques and equipment must be scientifically valid, adapted to local needs, and acceptable to clients and providers within available resources.
5. Health care is one component of total health development; other components and determinants of health such as education, housing, nutrition, and economic, social and political environments, are all essential for the achievement of health and well-being.

Nurses are the principal group of health personnel providing primary health care at all levels and maintaining links between individuals, families, communities and the rest of the health care system. Working with other members of the health care team and other sectors or on their own, nurses explore new and better ways of keeping well, or improving health and preventing disease and disability. Nurses improve equity and access to health care and add quality to the outcome of care (International Council of Nurses [ICN], 2000; Canadian Nurses Association [CNA], 2005).

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