



POSITION STATEMENT ÉNONCÉ

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

REGISTERED NURSE FIRST ASSISTANT (RNFA)

In 1989, the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada (ORNAC) began to explore an expanded role for perioperative nurses in the areas of perioperative nurse-surgery which has developed into the registered nurse first assist (RNFA) role.

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick worked with government in early 2002 on the removal of legislative barriers for New Brunswick nurses to work to their full scope. The legislative barrier that allowed only general practitioners to function in the first assist role in surgery was removed in July 2002.

New Brunswick Regulation 2002-55 under the *Hospital Act* came into force on July 15, 2002 and states:

Section 42 Except in case of emergency, no major surgery under a general or spinal anaesthetic shall be performed unless the surgeon or dental practitioner is assisted at the operation by a medical practitioner, a nurse who is properly trained or a member of the medical intern staff of the regional health authority who is not the anaesthetist.

Definition

The registered nurse first assistant is an experienced perioperative nurse who, prior to the successful completion of a formal RNFA educational program, has five years of current perioperative nursing experience (full-time or equivalent), and holds Canadian Nurses Association National Certification — CNP(C).

The RNFA is a “ ... perioperative registered nurse (who) practices expanded perioperative nursing in surgery by rendering assistance to the surgeon to facilitate quality care of patients undergoing surgical procedures. The increasing complexity of surgery provides the perioperative nurse who has expanded perioperative education with the opportunity to practice in collaboration

with and at the direction of the surgeon. The scope of practice of the RNFA is part of perioperative nursing practice and encompasses the preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative phases of the surgical experience” (ORNAC, 2003).

Scope of Practice

The RNFA is not intended to be an independent (autonomous) role for nurses in New Brunswick, rather, the RNFA works under a medically delegated function model. Formal education is required within the framework of a structured program that includes both theoretical study and clinical practicum.

The NANB document *Decision Making in Clinical Nursing Practice* (2000), outlines 1) the decision-making process to guide nursing administration in deciding whether it is appropriate to accept a delegated medical function, and 2) the criteria for implementation including a written employer policy that describes the role and conditions/restrictions of the implementation, an educational program of theory and clinical practice, and beginning and on-going competency assessment.

Professional responsibility

The professional responsibilities of a RNFA are the same as for all nurses practising in New Brunswick. The RNFA remains accountable for her own practice, her own actions and her level of competency, and is required to practice in accordance with ethical and nursing practice standards as established by NANB.

October 2003

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