



POSITION STATEMENT ÉNONCÉ

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

SCOPE OF NURSING PRACTICE

Legal definition of nursing

Nursing, as a legal term, is defined in the *Nurses Act* to be the practice of nursing “and includes the nursing assessment and treatment of human responses to actual or potential health problems and the nursing supervision thereof.” The practice of nursing progresses and develops over time.

Nursing and the concept of holism

The concept of holism is germane to nursing. This is evident in the nursing view of the individual, the concept of health and the practice of nursing.

Individuals are viewed as integrated physical, emotional, spiritual and social beings rather than just as biological systems.

Health is seen as the composite of the individual's physical, emotional, spiritual and social well-being.

Nursing Practice is not just a list of tasks -- it is a process that changes and advances. Any definition of the scope of practice must be flexible and broad enough to permit changes in practice consistent with trends in nursing and related health professions.

The scope of nursing practice

The practice of nursing can be conceptualized as having three components which are not mutually exclusive:

- a) a focus
- b) a goal or purpose and
- c) activities (i.e. functions and tasks).

Focus

The focus of nursing practice is the client's responses to actual or potential health problems. Nurses practise in many different settings with different types of clients. The term "client" refers to individuals, families, groups or communities.

Goal

The goal or purpose of nursing activity is the promotion and maintenance of health, prevention of injury and disease and the care and restoration of the sick and disabled so that the client may move toward optimal well-being or peaceful death.

Activities

Nurses are responsible and accountable for **all** activities embodied in the practice of nursing. Nursing practice is based on the nursing process which involves:

- (1) assessment of client need in terms of the client's responses to actual or potential health problems,
- (2) planning of care that is related to the identified needs and is goal directed,
- (3) implementation or supervision of care and
- (4) evaluation of the effects of care in relation to expected outcomes.

The application of the nursing process requires the judicious integration and synthesis of a specialized body of knowledge, learned skills and the element of caring. It is an interactive, dynamic process that occurs within the context of the helping relationship, such that the client's participation throughout all the phases is recognized and fostered. Nurses are responsible for ensuring that a nursing assessment is conducted, a plan of care is developed and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the nursing interventions is carried out with every client. However, nurses may delegate certain nursing tasks to the client, members of the client's family or auxiliary personnel. Nurses base their practice on theory that is partially generated by nursing and partially drawn from other disciplines.

The critical issue in assessing the scope of nursing practice is the determination of the nature and range of judgement required in the particular situation. For example, assessing whether or not a medication should be withheld, observing the effect the medication has had on existing symptomology and observing for side effects or adverse drug reactions are but a few of the integral and necessary aspects of medication administration.

Conclusion

All nurses function within the scope of nursing practice in accordance with the *Nurses Act*, code of ethics and standards of the profession. However, the extent to which an individual nurse engages in the total scope of nursing practice is influenced by many factors such as the nurse's education, experience, expertise and interests, the client population, the policies of the employing agency and relevant legislation. No nurse engages in areas of specialized nursing practice without adequate knowledge of and skills in the practice areas involved.

Among the prominent roles in which nurses function are those of practitioner, educator, administrator, researcher and consultant. Nurses also act in roles which are today perhaps nontraditional, but tomorrow may be part of the mainstream of nursing.

Note: The focus in holism is on the whole of whatever is being considered (for example, health, person, nursing) rather than on the parts of the whole.

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