

YOU'VE ASKED

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*As a registered nurse (RN), what do I need to consider before caring for one of my family members?*

Entering into a therapeutic nurse-client relationship with one's family member can create challenges. The therapeutic nurse-client relationship differs from a non-professional or personal relationship in that the needs of the client always come first. By virtue of the nature of the nurse-client relationship, it is not recommended to maintain simultaneously a therapeutic and a personal relationship with the client. RNs should always disclose the existence of personal relationships with a client, to ensure alternative care arrangements are made and remove self from care. But, in some situations where no other alternative is available, an RN could be required to care for family members (such as when an RN works in a small community). In these situations, the RN must carefully reflect on whether she/he can maintain objectivity when deciding to enter into a therapeutic nurse-client relationship with a family member and whether the relationship could interfere with meeting the family member's care needs. It is also necessary to ensure that providing care for a family member will not interfere with the care of other clients or with the dynamics of the health care team. Before making the decision, the RN should discuss the situation with colleagues and the employer. Employers may have specific policies in place in relation to providing nursing care to family members.

NANB's *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses* (2012) state that the RN initiates, maintains and concludes the therapeutic nurse-client relationship. Furthermore, NANB's document *The Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship*:

*Practice Standards* outlines the specific requirements in relation to the nurse-client relationship. All of these expectations apply regardless of the situation. It is with this in mind that the decision of entering into a therapeutic relationship with a family member

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**Before providing nursing services to a family member, the RN must reflect carefully on whether she/he can maintain objectivity in caring for the family member and whether the relationship interferes with meeting other client's needs.**

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will be made. Finally, in deciding whether or not to offer nursing services to a family member, the RN must consider the following: *consent, boundaries, confidentiality* AND the *nurse-client relationship*.

**Consent**

Consent protects the right of the client to be involved in an informed decision-making process about their own health care. Giving, refusing or withdrawing consent to care, treatment or research is an important step in the informed consent process. The RN must acknowl-

edge that some clients (family member) may not be comfortable with receiving nursing services from someone with whom they are related. The client should be informed that all options have been explored and that at this time the only option available is to have the RN who is a family member, provide care.

**Maintaining Boundaries**

When entering into a therapeutic relationship with a family member, it may be particularly difficult for the RN to maintain professional boundaries. When a family member becomes a client, the RN must clarify the need to shift from a personal to a professional relationship in an open and transparent manner. Furthermore, the RN needs to consider how she/he will be able to maintain the boundaries either within the formal nurse-client relationship or, outside the therapeutic relationship (ex., at home or in social gatherings), once the episode of care has ended. The practice standard *The Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship* (NANB, 2010) outlines the expected professional behaviors of the RN in relation to maintaining boundaries with clients.

**Confidentiality**

An essential aspect to consider before deciding to care for a family member is confidentiality. The *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses* (2012), state the RN must protect clients' privacy and confidentiality. Within the context of a therapeutic relationship with a family member, the RN will be privy to personal health information that she/he may not have been aware of as a family

member. The RN must maintain confidentiality and not share any of the information obtained in the context of a therapeutic relationship outside the health care team. An RN involved in the care of a family member needs to carefully reflect on how she will maintain confidentiality and not reveal information about the client to other family members, even after the therapeutic nurse-client relationship has ended. It's important to be aware of the legal and professional responsibilities as well as employer policies that address confidentiality of client information.

### Nurse-client Relationship

A therapeutic nurse-client relationship ends when the episode of care has ended. It is important to explain to the client (family member) that once the episode of care ends, you will no longer be formally involved in providing nursing care. As well, all personal health information that has been acquired within the nurse-client relationship should not be discussed and the family member should be encouraged to consult with their primary health care provider if further care is needed.

For more information, contact NANB at 1-800-442-4417 or by email at nanb@nanb.nb.ca.

### REFERENCES

- Canadian Nurses Association (2008). *The Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. Ottawa: Author.
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2011). *Consent: Practice Guideline*. Fredericton: Author.
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2012). *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses*. Fredericton: Author.
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2011). *The Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship: Practice Standards*. Fredericton: Author. ■

**TD Insurance**  
Meloche Monnex

## Moving away from home for the first time? Don't forget your renter's insurance

Renter's (or tenant) insurance may not be at the top of people's minds as they prepare to move away from home for the first time. According to a survey by TD Insurance, 39% of Canadian renters under 35 don't have renter's insurance.

"Many recent graduates or young people assume they don't need renter's insurance, because what they own might not be valuable enough to insure," says Sylvie Demers, Chairman, Affinity Market Group, TD Insurance. "Even if you don't have expensive jewellery or furniture, consider the cost of replacing your laptop. Renter's insurance is a cost-effective way to ensure you have the right coverage in the event that the unexpected occurs." Sylvie provides her tips on what to consider when purchasing renter's insurance:

- **Look for deals and ways to cut costs:** Purchasing your auto and renter's insurance with the same insurance provider or through your student or alumni association can often yield attractive discounts. The cost of renter's insurance can be as little as the price of two movie tickets, and you will have peace of mind in the event that the unexpected occurs.
- **Ensure you're covered for liability:** What many people don't realize is that they may be liable if someone is injured on their property. If your landlord doesn't salt the walkway in the winter, and someone trips, negligence may fall with your landlord. But if they slipped inside your apartment because you didn't clean up a puddle, you may be liable for their medical bills, lost wages and damages for pain and suffering out of your own pocket.
- **Understand your coverage:** Make sure you understand and are comfortable with your renter's insurance deductible (how much you will have to pay if you have to make a claim) and if your policy offers 'actual cash value' or 'replacement cost' coverage for your belongings. You should also inform your insurer about items that are particularly valuable—like jewellery, computers or instruments—as these may require additional coverage.
- **Is it worth the chance?:** The chances of something actually happening are so small it's not worth the cost. There are a number of common incidences and simple mistakes that are generally covered under renter's insurance, including:
  - If there is a break-in at your home
  - If you have a party and you accidentally cause damage to your neighbour's property or your landlord's property
  - If you forget to turn off your water when you leave your home for the winter holidays, and one of your pipes freezes and bursts