

FAQ

Signing for Medication Administration – When and How?

There have been many queries to the nurse consultants of NANB regarding the appropriate or acceptable time to sign for a medication being administered by a registered nurse (RN). It is written in the [Practice Standard: Medication Administration](#) (2016) that RNs are expected to “...prepare, administer and document the provision of medications to clients in a safe, competent and ethical manner,” (p. 6).

The NANB expects a RN to document in the client’s record, any medication that they has administered, during or immediately after the administration (NANB, 2016). An example of signing for a medication “during administration” is intravenous (IV) drug administration. The RN may sign for the IV drug once it is successfully hung and infusing into the client instead of waiting until the IV bag is empty before signing. Such practice would be considered signing during the administration of the medication.

RNs are also expected to practice according to NANB documentation standards and employer/agency policies. The [Standards for Documentation](#) (NANB, 2015, p. 6-7) outline practice expectations with the following guidance:

- RNs should refrain from co-signing unless agency policy clearly dictates the reason for the co-signature (e.g. independent double check of high-alert medication preparation such as insulin or discarding narcotics);
- RNs are expected to complete documentation in a timely manner - during, or as soon as possible after, the care or event;
- RNs must include their designation with their signature;
- the use of initials is acceptable when a master list of full signatures/initials is incorporated into the documentation tool or clinical record;
- RNs are to never delete, alter or modify anyone else’s documentation; and
- Abbreviations and symbols are to be used sparingly, and only if each abbreviation has a distinct interpretation that is approved by the employer.

Signing for a medication before it is administered is not meeting the standards set out by the nursing regulatory body, NANB, and therefore not acceptable practice. RNs are required to meet their regulatory standards and employer policies; hence, employers are expected to have clearly written guidance to support medication administration and documentation practices.

For further guidance please refer to the following resources:

CNPS Info Law: Medication Errors found at: https://www.cnps.ca/upload-files/pdf_english/mederror.pdf

NANB Webinar: “Documentation: Why all this paperwork?”
<http://www.nanb.nb.ca/webinars/entry/documentation-why-all-this-paper-work>