
CASE STUDY

HI I'M A NURSE PRACTITIONER, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY ROLE.



Mr. Daniels leaves home and arrives at the regional hospital with shortness of breath, dehydration, fever and productive cough. Mr. Daniels tells the staff, "I just don't have any energy this week, not even to eat."

Michael, a nurse practitioner (NP) in the regional hospital's emergency department (ED), assesses Mr. Daniels and writes orders to include: oxygen, chest x-ray, blood work and intravenous fluids.

Shelley, a registered nurse (RN) who is new to this practice setting has never worked on a team with a NP. She is caring for Mr. Daniels and has reviewed his chart and notes the NP's orders. Shelley wonders if she can implement the orders that Michael, the NP has written. She determines it would be best to ask the charge nurse for confirmation.

The charge nurse replies, "Yes, we are able to implement orders that have been written by NPs. In this department, we work with two NPs, Michael and Andrea. I don't believe you have met them yet. Why don't I introduce you to Michael right now and then he can provide you with information about his scope of practice."

When Shelly meets Michael she asks, “I have never worked with a NP before and would like to better understand your role. Can you tell me how the NP role is different from the RN role?” Michael provides the following overview of the NP scope of practice.

WHAT DOES HE SAY?

Michael explains that he has a Masters of Nursing in the NP stream and that NPs have advanced nursing competencies, providing a full range of comprehensive health services to the public. He explains that he works autonomously but collaborates with the healthcare team. Michael shares that the NP role is distinct from that of the RN and requires advanced knowledge and decision-making skills gained through further clinical practice, education and experience that enable NPs to perform additional activities that are not considered part of the registered nurse scope of practice (CNA, 2004). The professional role, responsibilities and accountability of the NP includes clinical practice, collaboration, consultation and referral, research and leadership.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS HAVE THE COMPETENCIES AND AUTHORITY TO:

- Conduct comprehensive health assessment.
- To diagnose health/illness conditions.
- Treat and manage acute and chronic illness within a holistic model of care.

Nurse practitioners order and interpret screening and diagnostic tests, perform procedures and prescribe medications and therapeutic interventions, while integrating the principles of resource allocation and cost-effectiveness, in accordance with federal, provincial and territorial legislation and policy.

SHELLEY WONDERS HOW THE NP ROLE DIFFERS FROM THE PHYSICIAN ROLE AND ASKS MICHAEL, “HOW DOES YOUR ROLE DIFFER FROM THE PHYSICIAN’S IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?”

The nurse practitioner role is a nursing role that complements, rather than replaces other health-care providers. NPs, as autonomous and independent health professionals, provide essential health services grounded in values, knowledge, theories and practice of the profession of nursing. They are health professional members of interprofessional health-care teams, and consult with, refer to, and are consulted by physicians and other health-care providers.

Michael tells Shelley that the NANB document, [Standards for the Practice of Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners](#) as well as the [Entry-Level Competencies for Nurse Practitioners](#) provides more information regarding the necessary skills, knowledge and competence required to engage in activities that NPs are authorized to perform. Michael also mentions to Shelley that he can tell her more about his role over coffee break.

After their brief conversation, Shelley thanks her colleague for the information regarding NP practice and proceeds to Mr. Daniels bedside, to implement the orders. Prior to starting Mr. Daniels' IV line, Mr. Daniels asks Shelley if the doctor will be coming in to see him. Shelley recognizes that Mr. Daniel's question is an opportunity to provide some patient teaching around role clarity of the various health-care providers that are part of his health-care team. Shelley spends time with Mr. Daniels discussing her role, the role of the NP and how they differ from and complement other members of the health-care team.

***Disclaimer:** Our case studies are fictional educational resources. While we strive to make the scenarios as realistic as possible, any resemblance to actual people or events is coincidental. Thank you to the [College & Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta](#) for granting permission to adapt their case study.*

RESOURCES

[Nurse Practitioners in New Brunswick- Primary Health Care NPs](#)

[Standards for the Practice of Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners](#)

[Entry-Level Competencies for Nurse Practitioners](#)