

Alpha Clin⁺ CLINICS Inc.

Guideline

Scope of Practice

Registered and Enrolled Nurses under Nursing Act

1. Preamble

A scope of practice definition communicates to others the competencies and professional accountability of the nurse. Practice of a profession requires knowledge of its scope of practice and the rules or conditions under which a person may practice. In South Africa this scope is defined by regulations framed under a section of the Nursing Act.

Defining the scope of practice indicates how far a particular profession may legitimately extend. There are numerous overlapping (grey) areas of practice between the various professions. The nurse must never perform the acts of a registered medical practitioner or pharmacist, unless authorized to do so with clearly defined protocols.

Defining a pharmacy nursing practitioner: The primary mission of the nursing practitioner in the pharmacy is to support and enable individuals, families, and groups to maintain, restore or improve their health status. Nursing care is based on the development of a helping relationship and the implementation and evaluation of therapeutic processes.

Every nurse must be in possession of the Government Regulation describing the scope of practice of registered and enrolled nurses. Nurses should keep up to date with amendments as they occur from time to time.

2. Responsibilities and functions of the Pharmacy Nursing Practitioner

To regulate the development of nursing practice, certain basic principles must be observed:

- Where a health care situation arises where the nurse has to undertake nursing activities not covered in the course of her basic preparation as a nurse or a midwife, she must ensure that she acquires the **relevant knowledge and competence before attempting such activities**, as she is held accountable for safe, ethical and competent practice.
- Where the nurse has to undertake procedures or activities that are normally performed by another category of registered health care professional, particularly medical practitioners, she, because she is accountable, must ensure herself of the following:

- A health need must exist by which the patient will be denied an essential health care activity if the nurse is not equipped to provide such a service.
- She must receive appropriate training to perform the activity and must be pronounced competent to perform it by the person(s) who provided the training.
- Guideline protocols must be prepared by the Health Authority to indicate under what circumstances and conditions she may perform such actions, and these must also be agreed to by the profession whose sphere of practice is being overlapped by the nurse.
- Accurate records must be kept of all such activities.
- If there is any doubt about the desirability of performing such professional functions, or if any measure of uncertainty exists, it is essential that the South African Nursing Council be consulted.

3. Specific responsibilities and functions of the Pharmacy Nursing Practitioner

3.1 Immunization

All registered nurses and midwives are trained to immunize clients. The nurse is entitled to administer vaccines if she complies with any of the following:

- If the nurse acts on a doctor's prescription and the patient has received the medication.
- If the pharmacist supplies the client with the vaccines according to the EPI Schedule (dispense over the counter within his/her own scope of practice as these vaccines are schedule 2) and the agreement between the pharmacist and the nurse is to administer the vaccines – the nurse remains accountable for the outcomes of her actions at all times. (Please note that vaccines not prescribed by the EPI are NOT Schedule 2 and need a doctor script before it can be dispensed)
- If she is licensed to do so.
- This permit only allows the nurse to acquire, possess, use or supply drugs and does not allow the nurse to prescribe drugs.
- If the nurse renders an immunization service and she is not complying with the above criteria, she is prescribing and acting outside the law.

3.2 Administration of medicines/injections

Registered nurses and midwives are trained to administer medication and injections and can do so:

- If the pharmacist dispenses the medication over the counter within his/her own scope of practice.
- If the nurse acts on a doctor's prescription and the client has already obtained the medication.

3.3 Family Planning

Registered nurses and midwives can render a family planning service if:

- The nurse completed an approved course in family planning
- If the nurse is licensed to do so.
- If the pharmacist dispenses the method over the counter (e.g. injectable method) and the nurse administer the injection
- If the nurse acts on a doctor's prescription and the client has already obtained the medication.

3.4 Authorization to diagnose and prescribe in the clinic

Without the proper qualifications or authorization, a nurse is not allowed to diagnose and prescribe treatment – unless functioning under section 56 of the Nursing Act (This is only relevant in the Government environment, this permission can't be transferred when a Nurse leaves the Government to work in Private Practice). The nurse is entitled, if she has the necessary qualifications, skills and expertise, to examine a patient. However, she is not entitled to make a medical diagnosis but can write down her findings and refer the client to the pharmacist or doctor. No course done by the nurse will provide automatic authorization to prescribe.

Authorization to prescribe is granted if the nurse:

- meets all the legal requirements of section 22(a)(c) of the Medicines and Related Substances Control Amended Act 72 of 2008 and of the Nursing Act No 33 of 2005,
- has successfully completed a course in dispensing, approved by the South African Nursing Council

The authorizing officer/Director General of Health shall:

- issue the authorization to a specific person for a specific place in writing.

The Pharmacy Amendment Act, No. 88 of 1997, does not make provision for the dispensing of a nurse's scripts

4. Important Definitions

Health needs are those signs, symptoms and processes that denote the interaction of individuals, the family, the group and the community with any actual or potential health problem that requires nursing intervention. Needs must be seen within the parameters of the psychosocial-physical context of health care.

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Co-ordination means the bringing together of acts of members of the health team to meet the spectrum of identified health needs of the individual, family, group or community.

Collaboration is essential for effective co-ordination. In this sense it means working together harmoniously to achieve a common objective in health care, while remaining personally accountable.

Assessment means the identification and recording of the specific needs of a person and making observations, conducting an assessment interview, interpreting oral history and records and confirming observations. Such action is applicable in any nursing care situation.

Diagnosing refers to the identification of a health problem in an individual or in the context of groups such as family, work or social groups and the community. Registered nurses make a nursing diagnosis, not a medical diagnosis, for the purpose of:

- identifying nursing needs to plan nursing care or action
- identifying a medical need and a need for referral to a doctor or hospital
- identifying a medical need for emergency action by the nurse

Prescribing means the written directions regarding treatment, nursing care, co-ordination, collaborating and patient advocacy functions essential to the effective execution and management of the nursing regimen. The nurse must take special note of the difference in concept between a nursing prescription and a medical prescription, which generally relates to diagnosis, treatment and specific aspects of care.

Treatment means the selection and performance of those therapeutic measures essential to the effective execution and management of the nursing regimen. Treatment refers to treatment initiated by the nurse.

Document date: September 2019