



ICN International Nurse Practitioner/Advanced Practice Nursing Network

Scope of Practice and Standards

Scope of Practice, Standards and Competencies of the Advanced Practice Nurse
Final Revision January 2005

The following draft of the Scope of Practice, Standards and Competencies of the Advanced Practice Nurse was completed following an international survey, analysis and revision which have been submitted to ICN for review in January 2005. The survey requested input from the National Nursing Association members of ICN, the members of the INP/APN Network, current members of the Core Steering Group, Subgroups and interested others. Following the analysis of the data received, an expert panel of advanced practice nurses modified the 7th draft and arrived at this final revision which is currently being reviewed.

The intended use of the document is as a guideline for nations and organizations planning the development of the Advanced Practice Nurse in their country. These standards, assumptions and competencies can be foundational in the development process of this professional nurse or measure the achievement when documenting or credentialing the nurse prepared to function in this role. It is not the intent of the document to be prescriptive but simply to share the findings of the international nursing community on the current scope of practice, standards and competencies of the APN in our global community. The NP/APN definition and characteristics at the beginning of this document are the official positions of ICN approved in 2002.

Definition:

“A Nurse Practitioner / Advanced Practice Nurse is a registered nurse who has acquired the expert knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for expanded practice, the characteristics of which are shaped by the context and / or country in which s/he is credentialed to practice. A Masters degree is recommended for entry level.” (ICN, approved 2002)

Characteristics

► Educational preparation

- Educational preparation at advanced level
- Formal recognition of educational programs preparing nurse practitioners/ advanced nursing practice roles accredited or approved.
- Formal system of licensure, registration, certification and credentialing.

► Nature of Practice

- Integrates research, education, practice and management.
- High degree of professional autonomy and independent practice.

- Case Management /own caseload
- Advanced health assessment skills, decision-making skills and diagnostic reasoning skills.
- Recognized advanced clinical competencies.
- Provision of consultant services to health providers.
- Plans, implements & evaluates programs.
- Recognized first point of contact for clients.

► **Regulatory mechanisms – Country specific regulations underpin NP / APN practice**

- Right to diagnose.
- Authority to prescribe medication.
- Authority to prescribe treatment.
- Authority to refer clients to other professionals.
- Authority to admit patients to hospital.
- Legislation to confer and protect the title “Nurse Practitioner / Advanced Practice Nurse”
- Legislation or some other form of regulatory mechanism specific to advanced practice nurses.
- Officially recognized titles for nurses working in advanced practice roles.
(ICN, approved 2002)

Scope of Practice

Introduction:

The following reflects the scope of practice for an Advanced Practice Nurse in the global community. This definition of scope of practice is intended to provide guidance and direction to nurses, the nursing profession, educators and regulatory authority/ies in determining the accepted level of practice for those prepared beyond the level of the generalist nurse. The scope will be appropriate where the concept of advanced practice nursing, as defined above, is acknowledged by the nursing profession and national governmental organizations. The collaborating health disciplines and credentialing authorities of the nation must also recognize the authorized role of the APN. Once the practitioner is educated and authorized, he/she then becomes fully accountable and responsible for his/her actions.

Scope of practice:

The scope of practice entails the cognitive, integrative and technical abilities of the qualified nurse to put into practice ethical and culturally safe acts, procedures, protocols and practice guidelines. The clinical practice of the APN is scientifically based and applicable to healthcare practice in primary, secondary and tertiary settings in all urban and rural communities. The role also encompasses the dimensions of patient and peer education, mentorship, leadership, management and includes the responsibility to translate, utilize and undertake meaningful research to advance and improve nursing practice.

The APN is able to:

1. **Conduct comprehensive advanced assessments of individual, families and communities.**
2. **Critically analyze and synthesize assessment data for sound decision-making.**
3. **Diagnose and manage healthcare problems and conditions.**
4. **Prescribe and write orders for diagnostic interventions, appliances, treatments and authorized medicines.**
5. **Initiate and coordinate the treatment and education for individuals, families and communities for their health protection, health promotion, and disease prevention.**
6. **Make referrals of patients to and receive referrals from other healthcare providers to ensure continuous care.**
7. **Serve as a consultant to other healthcare providers when appropriate.**
8. **Admit patients to and discharge patients from health care facilities.**
9. **Manage patient caseload when applicable.**
10. **Work collaboratively with public health, health care professionals and other relevant community leaders and/or agencies to improve the overall health of the community.**
11. **Initiate, contribute to and/or sustain research to promote evidence-based nursing practice.**
12. **Evaluate practice to ensure professional, ethical, equitable and quality healthcare service.**
13. **Use appropriate investigatory skills to improve and advance practice.**

STANDARDS AND CORE COMPETENCIES FOR ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING

Introduction

Access to health care, delivery of health care services and nurses providing these services are changing in response to the needs and demands of the global community. Each country and/or nation is attempting to deal with increasing and changing health care needs in a manner best suited for their people and available resources. As a result of the expanded needs, advanced practice nursing roles are emerging world-wide. This document aims to provide guidelines for the international nursing community, applicable professional, private and governmental institutions on the standards and core competencies required for the advanced practice nursing clinical roles. It is recognized that the APN works within the context of a health care environment that requires knowledge and skill beyond clinical expertise. These additional dimensions include the management of health care organizations, academic teaching, and policy making related to health care and humanitarian conditions. This document does not however cover standards related to these additional dimensions of the APN role.

The standards identified in these guidelines is based on the premise that core competencies will arise from the three pillars of nursing articulated by ICN, namely the standards for regulation, practice and socio-economic welfare. Essential standards for the education and regulation and core competencies of the APN are set out to assist countries during the formative period of the APN role development. They can be refined and adapted as the role emerges within each nation or country so that they reflect the applicable scope of practice and cultural context. References for additional guides can be found in the reference section of the paper.

Assumptions

The APN

1. Standards and competencies are built on those that a nurse brings from his/her generalist nurse preparation and experience.
2. Standards and competencies are focused on advanced clinical practice.
3. Standards and competencies are reviewed periodically for maintaining currency in practice.
4. Practices within the authorized and regulatory framework of his/her country
5. Practices within the established code of ethics.
6. Practices in a healthcare system environment that is influenced by the social, political and economic milieu.
7. Practices in collaboration with health care professionals.
8. Faculty/ies teaching advanced practice nursing is/are prepared at, or beyond the level of the students.

Standards for Regulation

In our societies, regulation, through a formally authorized institution or agency, public or private, has as its purpose to monitor and protect society and the individual practitioner. The body regulating the nursing profession, civil or professional, uses standards and the scope of practice to identify current practice and to evolve the rules necessary for acknowledging and regulating the advanced practice nurse. These standards should minimally include the following:

1. **Develop and maintain sound credentialing mechanisms that enable the qualified nurse to practice in the advanced role reflected in the established scope of practice.**
2. **Establish relevant civil legislation or rules to acknowledge the legitimate role monitor the competence, and protect the public as well as the nurse practicing in an advanced role.**
3. **Periodically revise regulatory language to maintain currency with practice and scientific advancement.**
4. **Establish the title protection through rule making or civil legislation.**

Standards for Education

The professional preparation of the advanced practice nurse has its foundation in educational institutions that are recognized by accrediting/approving bodies of the specific nation or international community. The formal education program for the experienced generalist nurse is preferably at the Master's level. Guidelines for curriculum development and content topics are beyond the scope of this document and will depend on the scope of practice for each specific nation or country and their health care system. Sources for additional direction can be found in the reference section of this document. Standards guiding the development of programs preparing advanced practice nurses are as follows:

1. **Programs prepare the generalist nurse for practice beyond that expected for entry into nursing practice, and include opportunities for the student to gain knowledge, experience and the necessary skills to competently function in the role of the advanced practice nurse.**
2. **Programs prepare the nurse to practice in the health care environment of the nation to the fullest extent of the role as defined in the recognized scope of practice.**
3. **Programs are staffed by qualified faculty.**
4. **Programs are accredited by the authorized credentialing body.**
5. **Programs facilitate lifelong learning and maintenance of competencies.**

Core Competencies

The competencies for advanced practice nursing roles arise from role requirements, principles of practice, rules and standards of professional behaviour necessary to provide competent, ethical and safe care. These core competencies are the foundation on which

individual practitioners, educators and regulators can determine the acceptable level necessary to practice in the advanced role for a specific national or situational context. These competencies also reflect the international values of the nursing profession and offer direction for clinical practice and professional development.

The competencies address two elements of the APN role; clinical practice and professional development. Both elements are essential for the APN to meet the acceptable standards of practice. These competencies will assist the individual practitioner to practice within the ever changing health care environment that responds to scientific advancements, disease patterns, and current political, social and economic pressures.

Practice Competencies

The APN

1. Uses advanced comprehensive assessment, diagnostic, treatment planning, implementation and evaluation skills.
2. Applies and adapts advanced skills in complex and /or unstable environments.
3. Applies sound advanced clinical reasoning and decision making to inform, guide and teach in practice.
4. Documents assessment, diagnosis, management and monitors treatment and follow-up care in partnership with the patient.
5. Prescribes and dispenses treatments according to the authorized scope of practice, guidelines and/or protocols.
6. Uses applicable communication, counselling, advocacy and interpersonal skills, to initiate, develop, and discontinue therapeutic relationships.
7. Refers to and accepts referrals from other health care professionals to maintain continuity of care.
8. Practices independently where authorized and the regulatory framework allows in the interest of the patients, families, and communities.
9. Consults with and is consulted by other health care professionals and others.
10. Works in collaboration with health team members in the interest of the patient.
11. Develops a practice that is based on current scientific evidence and incorporated into the health management of patients, families and communities.
12. Introduces tests, evaluates and manages evidence based practice.
13. Uses research to produce evidence based practice to improve the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of care.
14. Engages in ethical practice in all aspects of the APN role responsibility.
15. Accepts accountability and responsibility for their own advanced professional judgement, actions and continued competence.
16. Creates and maintains a safe therapeutic environment through the use of risk management strategies and quality improvement.
17. Assumes leadership and management responsibilities in the delivery of efficient advanced practice nursing services in a changing health care system.
18. Acts as an advocate for patients in the health care system and in the development of health policies that promote and protect the individual patient, family and community.
19. Adapts practice to the contextual and cultural milieu.

Professional Development Competencies

The competencies for professional development will assist the individual to accomplish and maintain the level of proficiency necessary to practice in the advanced role. These competencies speak to the individual's role in self governance of their professional practice and personal development.

The APN

1. Carries out regular review of own practice through peer review and other mechanisms.
2. Contributes to new knowledge and practice development by maintaining currency of scientific and technological advancements in nursing.
3. Evaluates health outcomes of advanced practice services to assist in shaping health care and nursing practice.
4. Participates in local and national policymaking, in concert with professional organizations, to influence equitable health care and the maintenance of the NP/APN role.
5. Provides leadership among peers in formulating and implementing policies, standards and procedures for advanced practice in the work environment.
6. Is organized professionally to promote the APN role through the refinement of measurable competency criteria and contribute to improved health care.

Conclusion

These standards and core competencies provide a foundation and broad guidelines for advanced practice nurses and contributing authorities all over the world to develop this role within their own country while meeting the established professional, authorized and regulatory frameworks and requirements.

For additional information please contact:

Rosemary Goodyear EdD, APRN-BC, FAANP
Chair, Core Steering Group
International Nurse Practitioner/Advanced Practice Nursing Network

rtgoodyear@aol.com