

ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE¹

CNA POSITION

Nurses in advanced nursing practice have the education, clinical expertise, leadership skills and understanding of organizations, health policy and decision-making to play an important role in client and system outcomes. They build nursing knowledge, advance the nursing profession and contribute to a sustainable and effective health-care system. Advanced practice nurses enhance the provision of timely, accessible, cost-effective and high-quality health care for all Canadians.

A coordinated national approach to advanced nursing practice is necessary to ensure that the public has access to consistent, high-quality nursing services across the country. A coordinated approach will also facilitate labour mobility for advanced practice nurses who are subject to specific provincial or territorial legislation.

Definition

Advanced nursing practice is an umbrella term describing an advanced level of clinical nursing practice that maximizes the use of graduate educational preparation, in-depth nursing knowledge and expertise in meeting the health needs of individuals, families, groups, communities and populations. It involves analyzing and synthesizing knowledge; understanding, interpreting and applying nursing theory and research; and developing and advancing nursing knowledge and the profession as a whole.

Characteristics

In advanced nursing practice, nurses build on their expertise in a specialty area, integrating and consistently displaying the following characteristics and features:

- provision of effective and efficient care, delivered with a high degree of autonomy, to an identified population;
- demonstration of leadership and initiation of change to improve client, organization and system outcomes;
- deliberate, purposeful and integrated use of in-depth nursing knowledge, research and clinical expertise, as well as integration of knowledge from other disciplines;
- depth and breadth of knowledge that draws on a wide range of strategies to meet the needs of clients and to improve access to and quality of care;
- ability to explain and apply the theoretical, empirical, ethical and experiential foundations of nursing practice;
- understanding, development and dissemination of evidence-based nursing knowledge;

¹ This position statement is based on *Advanced Nursing Practice: A National Framework* (2008), published by the Canadian Nurses Association.



- ability to initiate or participate in planning, coordinating, implementing and evaluating programs to meet client needs and support nursing practice;
- use of knowledge-transfer techniques to put research-based knowledge into practice;
- demonstration of advanced judgment and decision-making skills; and
- critical analysis of and influence on health policy.

Educational Preparation

The minimum educational preparation for advanced nursing practice is a graduate degree in nursing.

Roles

Advanced nursing practice focuses on clinical practice, whether through a direct relationship with clients or through a supportive and consultative role. It is anticipated that new advanced nursing practice roles will develop to meet the existing and emerging health-care needs of Canadians. Such new roles should reflect the characteristics and competencies outlined in *Advanced Nursing Practice: A National Framework*.²

Regulation

Advanced nursing practice is within the current scope of nursing practice and is therefore governed by prevailing regulatory approaches. The scope of practice of some advanced nursing practice roles, such as the nurse practitioner, includes additional responsibilities that may require additional regulatory authority.

Competencies

Advanced nursing practice is characterized by a set of core competencies integral to the characteristics and features listed above. Core competencies for advanced nursing practice are based on an appropriate depth, breadth and range of nursing knowledge, theory and research, enhanced by clinical experience.

BACKGROUND

As demand, technology and knowledge change the ways in which health care is delivered, interest in advanced nursing practice is on the rise. Trends in the delivery of health care are providing opportunities for nurses to expand current roles and create new ones. Nurses can choose from among a variety of diverse and equally valuable practice opportunities, of which advanced nursing practice is one. As nurses move along the continuum of experience and education, they acquire additional competencies that become incorporated into their practice. This evolution enables nurses to contribute to the health-care system in new ways.³

Advanced nursing practice has evolved to meet the demands of modern health care through increasingly advanced knowledge and skills. It is not merely technical and educational progress that has driven the development of advanced nursing practice; the health needs of clients and the growing complexity of care have also contributed. Advanced practice nurses have used their experience and education to take nursing practice to new levels as they

² (Canadian Nurses Association [CNA], 2008)

³ (CNA, 2008)

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have moved from a supportive to a leading role in client care.⁴ In Canada, the current advanced nursing practice roles are the clinical nurse specialist and the nurse practitioner.

In 2004, an 18-month initiative, the Canadian Nurse Practitioner Initiative (CNPI), was launched to facilitate the sustained integration of the nurse practitioner role in Canada and to develop mechanisms and processes to support it. The CNPI provided an opportunity for nurses to demonstrate to governments, stakeholders and the general public their capacity to make a significant contribution to primary health care renewal.⁵

Evidence about the benefits of advanced nursing practice is now building. Studies have shown that nurses in advanced practice roles may improve client and health-care system outcomes related to health status, functional status, quality of life, satisfaction with care and cost efficiency.⁶

Progress has been made in providing guidelines for the introduction and evaluation of advanced nursing practice roles. The PEPPA framework, a participatory, evidence-based, patient-centred process for advanced nursing practice role development, implementation and evaluation,⁷ and the CNPI implementation and evaluation toolkit⁸ are two tools that can be used to assess the need and readiness for advanced nursing practice roles. New advanced nursing practice roles should be introduced only in response to the health-care needs of Canadians and must be based on solid evidence of those needs.

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⁴ (CNA, 2008)

⁵ (CNA, 2006a)

⁶ (Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Browne & Pinelli, 2004)

⁷ (Bryant-Lukosius & DiCenso, 2004)

⁸ (CNA, 2006b)

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