

JOINT STATEMENT

Orders and delegation

Background

In August 2005, registered nursing was brought under the Health Professions Act. The *Nurses (Registered) and Nurse Practitioners Regulation* under this Act affects the practice of registered nurses and health professionals with whom they work.

The Regulation deals with different kinds of activities—restricted activities as well as activities that are not restricted. It also distinguishes between restricted activities that can be done without an order and those that require an order from an authorized health professional. When registered nurses carry out activities without an order, they are accountable for determining that the patient’s condition warrants performance of the activity and for managing the outcomes of their actions.

Orders

Physicians are authorized to give orders to registered nurses. Orders must be patient-specific; these can include instructions that are pre-printed. Pre-printed orders set out the usual care for a particular patient group or patient problem. They are made patient-specific by the ordering physician.

adding the name of the patient, making any necessary changes to the pre-printed order to reflect the needs of the individual patient, signing and dating the order. Standing orders are no longer permitted.

Orders that refer to another document (e.g., protocol, clinical practice guideline) are permitted under the Nurses (Registered) and Nurse Practitioners Regulation. The British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia (CPSBC) believe that such references should be placed on the patient’s chart. If this is not possible, the order must clearly identify the name and version of the document being referenced.

Shared accountability

When registered nurses carry out restricted activities ordered by physicians, accountability is shared.

Registered nurses are accountable for:

- making sure the order is patient-specific and given by an authorized health professional;

- making sure the activity is within the legislated scope of practice, congruent with BCCNM standards, limits and conditions, and in keeping with employer policies;
- having the competence to carry out the activity safely and ethically and to manage the intended and unintended outcomes of the activity;
- taking appropriate action if the order does not seem to be evidence-based or if it does not appear to consider individual patient characteristics and wishes; and
- obtaining patient consent.

Physicians are accountable for:

- ensuring the order is patient-specific and is clearly written or verbally articulated; and
- ensuring that the patient has consented to the proposed treatment.

Delegation

Delegation is required for restricted activities that fall outside the scope of practice of registered nurses. CPSBC and BCCNM must both agree that the restricted activity is appropriate for delegation to registered nurses. Additional information about delegation is available from both Colleges.

Physicians and registered nurses have a long history of working together to provide quality patient care. Clear responsibility and accountability for the provision of shared care supports communication and strengthens the working relationship.

Resources

British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM). [Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses: Standards, Limits, Conditions.](#)

College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia (CPSBC). *Delegation of a Medical Act.* Vancouver: author (no date).

For additional information, contact

BCCNM nursing practice consultants and advisors at 604.742.6200 x8803 or 1.866.880.7101 x8803

CPSBC deputy registrars at 604.733.7758 or 1.800.461.3008

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