Scope of Practice for Practical Nurses

Introduction

The Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD) is responsible for regulating the practice of nursing in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. A system of licensing and examination has been established to ensure nurses are safe to practice within the guidelines set by the HAAD Policy and Regulation Directorate. A Scope of Practice describes the roles and responsibilities of Licensed Nurses and provides a framework for establishing competency standards which determine specific outcomes to be demonstrated by a professional nurse in practice.

Nursing as a profession internationally, exists in diverse and changing social contexts which are experiencing the impact of globalisation more so than in previous decades. Rapid technological developments, increasing inter-country workforce mobility and ongoing discovery of new evidence based health care practices, creates challenges for Governments as they strive to ensure the maintenance and continuation of high quality health care delivery. HAAD’s Vision statement is ‘Reliable Excellence in Healthcare” and its Mission is, “To ensure excellent quality healthcare for the community” (HAAD, 2007).

Thus in the development of Scopes of Practice and competency standards frameworks for Registered Nurses and Practical Nurses in Abu Dhabi, consideration has been given to international best practice, while ensuring relevance of competency standards to the UAE context to support the achievement of both the HAAD’s Vision and Mission.

Nursing Defined

Nursing in the UAE needs to be considered within an international framework, and HAAD recognises and acknowledges the following International Council of Nurses’ Definition:

“Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles” (ICN Website, accessed May 2007)

Together with the World Health Organisation statement on nursing:

“Nursing is both an art and a science. It requires the understanding and application of specific knowledge and skills, and it draws on knowledge and techniques derived from the humanities and the physical, social, medical and biological sciences” (1996, p. 4)
Background for Practical Nurses

The following Scope of Practice is applicable for the second level or Practical Nurse (PN)1 who provides nursing care as delegated and supervised by the first level or Registered Nurse (RN). The PN is not licensed for independent practice and remains responsible and accountable for his/her own actions.

The HAAD acknowledges and refers to the Australian Nursing Council statement on the Enrolled Nurse, to define the Practical Nurse as “…a second level nurse who provides nursing care within the limits specified by education and the registering authority’s license to practice” (2007).

It is recognized that it is the registered nurse who remains responsible for planning, implementation and evaluation of nursing care, while also being responsible for supervision of all delegated care provided by a PN. The practical nurse works as a valuable member in a collaborative health care team and contributes to the overall planning and delivery of nursing care at evidenced based standards. The PN is required to ensure s/he does not work outside the HAAD PN Scope of Practice, and remains responsible for recognising limitations in their own level of competency. It is expected that a PN abides by the MOH (2001) Code of Professional Conduct and demonstrates a standard of practice which promotes the health and wellbeing of all in her/his care.

PN education and training programs in relation to medication administration vary greatly throughout the world. Due to the large expatriate nursing workforce in the UAE and the absence of an accredited national Practical Nurse education program, HAAD excludes medication administration from the PN Scope of practice. It is not expected that PNs have a role in preparation, administration or documentation of medications, as this element of performance lies outside their scope of clinical practice competency.

The following document details the Competency framework for the Practical Nurse or Assistant Nurse as defined in the HAAD Personnel Qualifications Requirement (PQR)2.

The competencies have been organised into three main Domains of Nursing in alignment with those of the registered nurse. While the broad Competency areas of the RN and PN are similar, the performance outcomes differ somewhat according to the knowledge and skill level expected in practice.

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1 As titled – Practical Nurse, Assistant Nurse, Nursing Assistant etc
2 As “…a graduate of a recognised nursing school with not less than 18 months study duration from an accredited program” after high school
Domain 1: Management of Nursing Care

This domain relates to aspects of a practical nurse's performance and behaviour which is required to provide appropriate and safe care under the direction of a registered nurse. This care is delivered to patients/clients in a manner which is responsive to individual needs and is supported by evidence based nursing knowledge and skills within the scope of practice for a practical nurse.

Domain 2: Professional and Ethical Practice

This domain reflects the practical nurse’s understanding of the professional code of conduct and their ability to work collaboratively under the direction of a registered nurse (or licensed physician or dentist), while maintaining professional standards.

Domain 3: Professional Development

This domain acknowledges that each nurse is accountable for establishing, maintaining and evaluating their own lifelong learning needs including a commitment to the development of others and the profession.

Domain 1: Management of Nursing Care

Competency 1.1
Promotes patient optimum health and wellbeing

**Performance outcomes**

1.1.1 Promotes and supports patient understanding of major health determinants
1.1.2 Contributes to patient education on health risk factors
1.1.3 Contributes to patient and family education on development of behavioural strategies related to healthy living
1.1.4 Participates in implementation of health promotion strategies for early detection and screening for communicable diseases
1.1.5 Reduces the risk of disease transmission through applying standard (universal) infection control principles
1.1.6 Identifies, records and takes appropriate action to reduce incidence of disease transmission
1.1.7 Follows the nursing process under RN guidance, to promote patient holistic health and well-being

Competency 1.2
Promotes and environment that maximizes patient safety

**Performance outcomes**

1.2.1 Identifies environmental and behavioural risk factors that may potentially compromise patient safety
1.2.2 Identifies and acts to reduce risk and harm
1.2.3 Intervenes and reports incidents to reduce likelihood of re-occurrence
Competency 1.3
Promotes patient physiological and psychological integrity

**Performance outcomes**

1.3.1 Collaborates with the registered nurse to participate in the planning and management of nursing interventions to optimise outcomes for patients through the lifespan in various states of health and illness.

**Sub outcomes (as guided by the RN)**

1.3.1.1 Provides basic care and comfort within the defined scope of competency
1.3.1.2 Provides care for patients with acute and chronic physical health conditions
1.3.1.3 Provides care for patients with acute, chronic and persistent mental health disorders
1.3.1.4 Provides care for the pregnant woman and family, including care of the normal newborn
1.3.1.5 Provides care for acute and chronic conditions of a child from birth to adolescence
1.3.1.6 Demonstrates basic understanding of pharmacological interventions
1.3.1.7 Recognises changes in patient’s health status and responds in a timely and appropriate manner
1.3.2 Contributes to nursing assessment of patients through data collection and reporting (including documentation)
1.3.3 Participates with the RN to evaluate and alter nursing care to ensure patient needs and outcomes are accurately prioritised

Domain 2: Professional and Ethical Practice

Competency 2.1
Demonstrates professional behaviour when working with people

**Performance outcomes**

2.1.1 Implements nursing care that demonstrates respect for human rights
2.1.2 Recognises and assumes responsibility to work within professional standards and ethical codes of practice
2.1.3 Protects the patient from risks, harm, abuse or neglect
2.1.4 Demonstrates accurate knowledge of policies and procedures that guide practice
2.1.5 Recognises and acts upon policies, procedures or orders that might put at risk a patient’s therapeutic outcomes
2.1.6 Provides guided nursing care that is sensitive to the needs and rights of individuals/groups and is within current legislation and ethical principles
2.1.7 Ensures confidentiality of patient information
2.1.8 Demonstrates a sensitivity to diversity in cultural and religious beliefs
2.1.9 Utilises effective time management strategies to organise workload

2.1.10 Performs safe, effective and efficient nursing interventions under the guidance of the RN, while ensuring patient's preferences are taken into consideration

2.1.11 Establishes and maintains professional boundaries with patients and members of the health care team

2.1.12 Recognises limitations in own professional knowledge and skills and takes appropriate action

2.1.13 Assumes accountability for own practice

Competency 2.2
Upholds and contributes to the maintenance of professional nursing standards

Performance outcomes

2.2.1 Participates in ongoing education to contribute to continual improvement of nursing care standards

2.2.2 Incorporates latest scientific and technological advances of relevance into clinical practice

2.2.3 Demonstrates a standard of personal health which ensures that patient care is not compromised

2.2.4 Demonstrates the ability to self-regulate through ongoing reflection and assessment of competency to practice

Competency 2.3
Actively contributes to collaborative working relationships with members of the interdisciplinary health care team

Performance outcomes

2.3.1 Establishes collaborative relationships with other members of the interdisciplinary team to optimise patient outcomes

2.3.2 Identifies, reports and documents health care practices that may compromise patient care, privacy or dignity and takes appropriate remedial action within the PN competency framework

2.3.3 Demonstrates respect for variations in competence and professional knowledge between members of a multidisciplinary health care team

2.3.4 Seeks and acts upon constructive feedback related to professional performance from colleagues
Domain 3: Professional Development

Competency 3.1
Demonstrate a commitment to development of self

Performance outcomes
3.1.1 Reflects upon and evaluates own nursing practice
3.1.2 Actively seeks new knowledge and information to ensure ongoing professional development and competency to practice
3.1.3 Participates in ongoing professional development activities
3.1.4 Seeks and acts upon constructive feedback from other health care professionals
3.1.5 Maintains record of all learning and professional development activities attended
3.1.6 Maintains current license to practice as an outcome of self-regulation

Competency 3.2:
Demonstrates a commitment to development of others

Performance outcomes
3.2.1 Collaborates and shares knowledge and information with others
3.2.2 Supports and mentors other PNs less experienced or new to the profession
3.2.3 Participates in relevant education programs

Competency 3.3:
Demonstrates a commitment to development of the profession

Performance outcomes
3.3.1 Contributes to nursing and health care policy
3.3.2 Represents the nursing profession within own scope of competency and knowledge on relevant committees and taskforces
3.3.3 Identifies opportunities for, and contributes to, nursing education programs
3.3.4 Collaborates and shares new and emerging nursing knowledge
References:

An Bord Altranais (April 2000) Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework


Federal Department of Nursing, MOH, UAE (2004) Scope of Practice Registered Nurse and/or Midwife. Abu Dhabi: Author

Federal Department of Nursing, MOH, UAE (2005) Core Practice Standards for the Registered Nurse and/or Midwife. Abu Dhabi: Author


