

Professional Nursing Practice

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Define nursing
2. Recognize characteristics of a professions
3. Identify the scope of nursing practice
4. Distinguish the standards of professional nursing practice

Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, facilitation of healing, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations.

Characteristics of A Profession

1. Systematic Theory and Knowledge Base

Each profession is guided by systematic theory, on which its knowledge base is built.

2. Authority

This authority occurs through education and experience, which give the professional the knowledge and skills to make professional judgments. The client perceives the professional as having the knowledge and expertise to assist the client in meeting some need.

3. Community Sanction

The professional community is responsible for ensuring safe and effective practice within the discipline. Professional and legal regulation of nursing practice as a community sanction occurs through statutes, rules and regulations, definition of practice, and expectations for practitioners.

4. Code of Ethics

A professional abides by a certain code of ethics applicable to the practice area. Developed within the profession, the code addresses general ethical practice issues.

5. Professional Culture

Professional culture is the formal and informal groups represented in the profession.

Formal groups refer to the organizational systems in which the professional's practice, the educational institutions that provide for basic and continued learning, and the professional associations.

Informal groups are the collegial settings that provide for collaboration, stimulation, and sharing of mutual values.

These informal groups exist within each formal group, providing further professional, collegial inclusiveness.

These groups and the unique culture of nursing are reinforced in the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses.

The Scope of Nursing Practice

The Scope of Nursing Practice describes the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how” of nursing practice.

Each of these questions must be answered to provide a complete picture of the dynamic and complex practice of nursing and its evolving boundaries and membership.

Healthcare consumers are the patients, persons, clients, families, groups, communities, or populations who are the focus of attention and to whom the registered nurse is providing services as sanctioned by the state regulatory bodies.

Registered nurses (RNs) are individuals who are educationally prepared and licensed by a state, commonwealth, territory, government, or regulatory body to practice as a registered nurse.

The Standards of Professional Nursing Practice

The standards are authoritative statements of the duties that all registered nurses, regardless of role, population, or specialty, are expected to perform competently.

The standards of professional nursing practice consist of the Standards of Practice and the Standards of Professional Performance.

Standards of Practice

The standards of practice describe a competent level of nursing care as demonstrated by the critical thinking model known as the nursing process. The nursing process includes the components of assessment, diagnosis, outcomes identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Standard 1. Assessment

The registered nurse collects pertinent data and information relative to the healthcare consumer’s health or the situation.

Standard 2. Diagnosis

The registered nurse analyzes the assessment data to determine actual or potential diagnoses, problems, and issues.

Standard 3. Outcomes Identification

The registered nurse identifies expected outcomes for a plan individualized to the healthcare consumer or the situation.

Standard 4. Planning

The registered nurse develops a plan that prescribes strategies to attain expected, measurable outcomes.

Standard 5. Implementation

The registered nurse implements the identified plan.

Standard 5A. Coordination of Care

The registered nurse coordinates care delivery.

Standard 5B. Health Teaching and Health Promotion

The registered nurse employs strategies to promote health and a safe environment.

Standard 6. Evaluation

The registered nurse evaluates progress toward attainment of goals and outcomes.

Standards of Professional Performance

A standard is an expected and achievable level of performance against which actual performance can be compared. It is the minimum level of acceptable performance.

The Standards of Professional Performance describe a competent level of behavior in the professional role, including activities related to ethics, culturally congruent practice, communication, collaboration, leadership, education, evidence-based practice and research, quality of practice, professional practice evaluation, resource utilization, and environmental health.

Standard 7. Ethics

The registered nurse practices ethically.

Standard 8. Culturally Congruent Practice

The registered nurse practices in a manner that is congruent with cultural diversity and inclusion principles.

Standard 9. Communication

The registered nurse communicates effectively in all areas of practice.

Standard 10. Collaboration

The registered nurse collaborates with healthcare consumer and other key stakeholders in the conduct of nursing practice.

Standard 11. Leadership

The registered nurse leads within the professional practice setting and the profession.

Standard 12. Education

The registered nurse seeks knowledge and competence that reflects current nursing practice and promotes futuristic thinking.

Standard 13. Evidence-based Practice and Research

The registered nurse integrates evidence and research findings into practice.

Standard 14. Quality of Practice

The registered nurse contributes to quality nursing practice.

Standard 15. Professional Practice Evaluation

The registered nurse evaluates one's own and others' nursing practice.

Standard 16. Resource Utilization

The registered nurse utilizes appropriate resources to plan, provide, and sustain evidence-based nursing services that are safe, effective, and fiscally responsible.

Standard 17. Environmental Health

The registered nurse practices in an environmentally safe and healthy manner.

The Function of Competencies in Standards

The competencies that accompany each standard may be evidence of demonstrated compliance with the corresponding standard. The list of competencies is not exhaustive.

Whether a particular standard or competency applies depends upon the circumstances.

For example, a nurse providing treatment to an unconscious, critical healthcare consumer who presented to the hospital by ambulance without family has a duty to collect comprehensive data pertinent to the healthcare consumer's health (Standard 1. Assessment).

However, under the attendant circumstances, that nurse may not be expected "to assess family dynamics and impact on the healthcare consumer's health and wellness" (one of Standard 1's competencies). In the same instance, Standard 5B. Health Teaching and Health Promotion might not apply at all.

Integrating the Art and Science of Nursing

Nursing is a learned profession built on a core body of knowledge that reflects its dual components of art and science. Nursing requires judgment and skill based on principles of the biological, physical, behavioral, and social sciences.

Nurses employ critical thinking to integrate objective data with knowledge gained from an assessment of the subjective experiences of healthcare consumers. Nurses use critical thinking to apply the best available evidence and research data to diagnosis and treatment decisions.

Nursing advocates for the well-being, comfort, dignity, and humanity of all individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations. Nursing focuses on healthcare consumer and inter-professional collaboration, sharing of knowledge, scientific discovery, and social welfare.

Tenets Characteristic of Nursing Practice

The conduct of nursing practice in all settings also can be characterized by the following tenets:

1. Caring and health are central to the practice of the registered nurse.

Professional nursing promotes healing and health in a way that builds a relationship between nurse and patient. “Caring is a conscious judgment that manifests itself in concrete acts, interpersonally, verbally, and nonverbally”.

2. Nursing practice is individualized.

Nursing practice respects diversity and focuses on identifying and meeting the unique needs of the healthcare consumer or situation. *Healthcare consumer is defined to be the patient, person, client, family, group, community, or population who is the focus of attention and to whom the registered nurse is providing services as sanctioned by the state regulatory bodies.*

3. Registered nurses use the nursing process to plan and provide individualized care for healthcare consumers.

The nursing process is cyclical and dynamic, interpersonal and collaborative, and universally applicable.

Nurses use theoretical and evidence-based knowledge of human experiences and responses to collaborate with healthcare consumers to assess, diagnose, identify outcomes, plan, implement, and evaluate care that has been individualized to achieve the best outcomes.

Nursing actions are intended to produce beneficial effects, contribute to quality outcomes, and above all, “do no harm.” Nurses evaluate the effectiveness of care in relation to identified outcomes and use evidence-based practice to improve care. Critical thinking underlies each step of the nursing process, problem-solving, and decision-making.

4. Nurses coordinate care by establishing partnerships.

The nurse establishes partnerships with persons, families, groups, support systems, and other providers, utilizing effective in-person and electronic communications, to reach a shared goal of delivering safe, quality health care to address the health needs of the healthcare consumer and the public.

The nurse is responsible and accountable for communicating and advocating for the planning and care coordination focused on the healthcare consumer, families, and support systems. Collaborative inter-professional team planning is based on recognition of each individual profession's value and contributions, mutual trust, respect, open discussion, and shared decision-making.

5. A strong link exists between the professional work environment and the nurse's ability to provide quality health care and achieve optimal outcomes.

Professional nurses have an ethical obligation to maintain and improve healthcare practice environments conducive to the provision of quality health care.