



HEALTH PROFESSIONS LICENSING AUTHORITY	
TITLE: Position Statement on Enrolled Nurses and Medication Administration	
EFFECTIVE DATE: October 2002	REVIEW DATE: May 2007
NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: May 2009	
BOARD: Nursing and Midwifery Board of the Northern Territory	

The Enrolled Nurse and supervision requirements

In the Northern Territory there are two types of nurse: the registered nurse (RN) and the enrolled nurse (EN). The EN is an associate to the RN and must always work under the direction and supervision of an RN. Section 40(3) of the *Health Practitioners Act* states that supervision may be direct or indirect and includes oversight, direction, guidance and support.

Accountability

Regardless of the supervision requirements, ENs are accountable for their own practice and should adhere to both the profession's standards and the relevant workplace policies.

Medication Administration and Competence

All ENs who administer medication must be competent in that activity. To be able to demonstrate competence in the area of medication administration ENs who administer or assist patients with medication must:

1. Know why the medication is ordered;
2. Know the effect and possible adverse effect of the medication and any contraindications;
3. Be able to explain to the patient the reasons for, and effect of, the medication;
4. Be able to recognise and report the therapeutic effect and adverse effect of the medication; and
5. Carry out the necessary checks to ensure that the right patient is receiving the right dose of the right drug by the right route at the right time in the right form.

Delegation

RNs must always ensure that ENs are competent before delegating any medication-related activities. The RN remains responsible for planning the client/patient's care, including the actions required to monitor the effectiveness of medications.

Legislation and scope of practise

The *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act* is silent on the role of ENs in administering medications. For this reason, ENs must be guided by their scope of practise.

The Board has adopted the following definition:

“The scope of nursing practice is that which nurses are educationally, authorised and competent to perform. The actual scope of practice of the individual nurses’ practice is influenced by the setting in which they practise, the health needs of people, the level of competence of the nurse and the policy requirements of the service provider.”¹

Enrolled Nurses and Checking Medications

ENs may check a medication or other substance if this is clearly set out in any guidelines/policies/procedures developed by the employer. The *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act* stipulates that two people must check medications when a Schedule 8 is to be administered.

Mutual Recognition

In other states ENs can apply to the Nursing Board for medication endorsement. In the Northern Territory the Board does not formally endorse or authorise medication administration by ENs. Where workplace policies allow ENs to administer medication, both ENs and their employers must ensure that they are competent to do so.

This can be done in a number of ways:

- providing evidence of completion of a medication/pharmacology course
- completing an employer-sponsored medication/pharmacology course.

Medication endorsement granted in another state does not automatically entitle ENs to administer medications in the Northern Territory.

For example, Jenny an EN has recently moved to the Northern Territory from Queensland. In Queensland, as a medication endorsed EN, Jenny was able to administer subcutaneous heparin to clients/patients in the surgical ward. As the Medication Administration Policy in her new place of employment clearly states that the administration of medications subcutaneously must be undertaken by the RN, this nursing activity will no longer be included in Jenny’s scope of practice.

Summary

In the Northern Territory ENs may administer medications if they:

- practise in accordance to the relevant legislation and professional practice standards;
- have the requisite skills, knowledge and competence to undertake this nursing activity; and
- work in accordance with the medication administration policies and procedures that apply to their place of practice.

References

- Queensland Nursing Council – Enrolled Nurses and Medication Administration.
- Nurses and Midwives Board of New South Wales – Medication Endorsement for Enrolled Nurses
- Nurses Board of South Australia – Standard for Medication Management.
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council – National Competency Standards for the Enrolled Nurse, October 2002.

¹ Queensland Nursing Council 2005 Scope of Practice Framework for Nurses and Midwives