



South African Nursing Council

(Under the provisions of the Nursing Act, 2005)

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COMPETENCIES FOR PRIMARY CARE NURSE SPECIALIST

1. NATURE OF SPECIALISATION

Primary Care Nurse Specialist is a Professional Nurse with an additional qualification in Primary Care Nursing and is registered as such by the South African Nursing Council. This specialist provides direct care to patients with all types of illnesses and ailments, offering the first level of nursing care that patients receive. She/he is a Registered Nurse who is competent to independently render appropriate and skilled primary care service as first line care.

She/he is an independent nurse specialist who focuses on individuals with health problems.

This nurse specialist conducts physical assessment, diagnoses illnesses, prescribes treatment, provides direct care to health care consumers and refers for further treatment.

2. CONTEXT

The Primary Care Nurse is found in primary care settings/services, which include but are not limited to, all clinics, primary health care centres, prisons, hospital "Out Patients' Department", ward-based, Non-Governmental Organizations, private partners e.g. pharmacy setting. The context will include all kinds of health establishments.

3. CONTINUUM OF CARE

The Primary Care Nurse gets patients/clients directly from the communities. She/he refers to general medical practitioner, medical specialist, other nurse specialist and any level of health establishment.

4. OVERLAP OF COMPETENCIES WITH OTHER NURSING SPECIALIZATIONS

The competencies of this nurse specialist overlap with some of the competencies of other nursing specializations. These include, among others, Family Nursing and Community Health Nursing.

DOMAIN 1: PROFESSIONAL, ETHICAL AND LEGAL PRACTICE	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
1.1 Professional Practice	1.1.1 Takes responsibility for own case load of (client) health care users and practice, including diagnosis and prescribing practice
	1.1.2 Collaborates/consults with peers and other health professionals regarding patient assessment, diagnose and management
	1.1.3 Practises as an independent and autonomous Primary Care Nurse Specialist
	1.1.4 Accepts personal and professional responsibility/accountability for legal consequences of own diagnosis and prescribing practices
	1.1.5 Liaises with local health services, organizations, including pharmacies
	1.1.6 Works within National Health Care Systems, codes of conduct related to treating patients, including prescribing medicines
1.2 Ethical Practice	1.2.1 Approaches health care users presenting with health problems related to ethical dilemmas and stigma in a non-judgmental manner
	1.2.2 Practices own profession according to Code of Ethics/conduct and standards related to primary clinical care
	1.2.3 Identifies ethical dilemmas and make a critical and responsible decision, taking into consideration all legal and ethical frameworks
1.3 Legal Practice	1.3.1 Applies and functions within all relevant and current legislation, policies and protocol related to Primary Care Practice, including prescribing practices
	1.3.2 Accepts responsibility and accountability for own clinical conduct and practice
	1.3.3 Compiles and keeps accurate clear and complete records of the assessment, diagnosis and management of the patient

DOMAIN 2: CLINICAL PRACTICE	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
2.1 Health Promotion and Prevention	2.1.1 Plans and implement life style adjustment/management according to the specific health needs of the client in consultation with the client
	2.1.2 Refers appropriately to other members of the health team
	2.1.3 Identify health, psycho-socio-economic risk factors in the individual family/environment
	2.1.4 Identifies problems, distinguishing between drug-related and other health problems
2.2 Assessment (Conduct health assessment/physical examination of any person)	2.2.1 Conducts a comprehensive and holistic health assessment on clients of all age groups, with complex health problems (acute, chronic and emergencies)
	2.2.2 Conducts a rapid appraisal and assessment of emergency conditions
	2.2.3 Determines patient's history, both medical and medicinal
	2.2.4 Interprets history and identifies health problems and makes a differential diagnoses
	2.2.5 Conducts skilfully, an advanced physical examination utilizing the four basic assessment techniques (inspection, palpation, percussion and auscultation) using relevant equipment
	2.2.6 Synthesizes and interpret history and physical examination findings to make an appropriate diagnosis and or health problem
	2.2.7 Performs and requests diagnostic investigations as justified by the patient's health status/condition, protocol and authorisation)
	2.2.8 Requests relevant and specific tests
	2.2.9 Interprets investigation results to confirm the final diagnoses
2.3 Diagnosis (Diagnose illnesses, any defects, illness or deficiency)	2.3.1 Interprets history and physical examination findings to identify a health problems and makes differential diagnoses
	2.3.2 Orders laboratory tests and perform diagnostic procedures, relevant to findings in history and physical examination findings
	2.3.3 Applies in depth knowledge of anatomy, physiology and patho-physiologyin assessing, and management of specific conditions
	2.3.4 Assesses multiple pathologies to make differential diagnosis
	2.3.5 Makes specific diagnosis (final diagnosis)

DOMAIN 2: CLINICAL PRACTICE	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
2.4 Planning	2.4.1 Discusses with health care user (and family), the diagnosis, treatment and possible complications, to obtain participation and increase compliance
	2.4.2 Compiles and implement a treatment plan specific to this patient (drug and non-drug treatment)
	2.4.3 Discusses patient responsibilities towards achieving expected short and long term treatment outcomes
	2.4.4 Provides appropriate pre-referral/emergency treatment to stabilize patient
	2.4.5 Communicates clearly to the patient her/his specific individual follow-up plan (including urgent/immediate return) for the continuation of care
2.5 Implementation (Provides direct care including prescribing medicines)	2.5.1 Prioritizes and manages effectively own patient load
	2.5.2 Prescribes relevant medication as per applicable legislation and protocols, taking into account prescriber's responsibility and accountability (Rational drug prescribing)
	2.5.3 Apply in depth knowledge of Pharmacology when considering drug management of a specific patient
	2.5.4 Selects the most appropriate drug, dose and formulation for an Individual patient
	2.5.5 Administers drugs in accordance with procedural and regulatory measures
	2.5.6 Prescribing according to competency level and authorization
	2.5.7 Keeps and stores medication as per specific drug instructions
	2.5.8 Controls and records the supply of pre-packed drugs according to the prescribed protocols and legal requirements
	2.5.9 Maintains security and integrity of all records including prescription forms
	2.5.10 Provides specific explanations to the client on relevance of medicine to their health problem
	2.5.11 Provide clarity on medication action, including but not limited to correct dosages, desired action, interactions, contra-indications, adverse effects
	2.5.12 Gives clear instructions to the patient about taking of their medication (i.e. when, how and why)
	2.5.13 Seeks guidance from other health care professionals and prescribers
	2.5.14 Adheres to all principles of prescribing that meets legal requirements (legibility, clarity, completeness)
	2.5.15 Refers appropriately clients/patients with complicated health problems to the next level of health care

DOMAIN 2: CLINICAL PRACTICE	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
2.6 Evaluation (Adjusts prescription according to identified drug-drug/drug-food interactions)	2.6.1 Evaluates progress and treatment response
	2.6.2 Adjusts treatment plan as required by patient's condition
	2.6.3 Checks patient's understanding and commitment or compliance to treatment regime
	2.6.4 Identifies and manage potential complications of the presenting condition, as well as side/adverse effects of the drugs
2.7 Therapeutic Communication and Relationships	2.7.1 Obtain informed consent for procedures and treatment, and respect the patient's and family choice
	2.7.2 Applies effective therapeutic communication skills throughout consultation process (assessment, diagnosing, prescribing and referral)

DOMAIN 3: PERSONAL AND QUALITY CARE	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
3.1 Quality Improvement	3.1.1 Participates actively in the development of clinical protocols and guidelines related to area of practice
	3.1.2 Participates in setting of standards for clinical practice for nurse specialist
	3.1.3 Applies evidence-based practice to keep up-dated and skilled with the consultation and management of patients
	3.1.4 Engages in reflective clinical practice to improve care
	3.1.5 Audits patient records
	3.1.6 Engages in peer group mentoring and evaluation to improve quality
	3.1.7 Documents, shares and reports practices, including prescribing errors and near misses
	3.1.8 Searches and uses tools that improve prescribing practice
	3.1.9 Establishes professional links with other practitioners and prescribers
3.2 Continuing Education	3.2.1 Takes responsibility and complies with CPD requirements specific to Primary Care Nursing Practice as required by a professional/regulatory body
	3.2.2 Takes responsibility to update self on the latest legislation, policies, protocols, guidelines regarding the assessment, diagnosis and management of acute, chronic and emergency conditions, including prescribing
	3.2.3 Keeps updated and skilled with the latest/current diagnostic technology and other related technology

DOMAIN 3: PERSONAL AND QUALITY CARE	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
	3.2.4 Keeps updated and skilled with current/new clinical procedures
	3.2.5 Takes responsibility and complies with CPD requirements specific to Primary Care Nursing Practice as required by a professional/regulatory body

DOMAIN 4: MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
	4.1 Partakes in the development and change/review of health policies, related to primary care and prescribing
	4.2 Establishes working relationships with colleagues, including private practitioners to ensure that continuity of care is not compromised
	4.3 Negotiates the appropriate level of support required by her role as a primary care specialist and supplementary prescriber
	4.4 Provides support and advice to other primary care specialists
	4.5 Supervises and mentors nursing students and prospective nurse specialists and other categories of health workers
	4.6 Engages and contributes in the development of the clinical nurse specialist practice through involvement in consultation processes of professional bodies
	4.7 Delegates and distributes clinical workload and responsibilities as required by the situation and available resources

DOMAIN 5: RESEARCH	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
	5.1 Keeps and shares accurate statistics
	5.2 Conducts clinic surveys
	5.3 Compiles disease profiles and trends from the patient statistics
	5.4 Conducts research in order to guide and improve the quality of clinical practice and reduce mortality rate

DOMAIN 5: RESEARCH	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
	5.5 Analyzes and applies existing relevant research to improve clinical practice
	5.6 Attends and presents research papers in relevant conferences (national and international)
	5.7 Takes part and contributes in local, national and international journal clubs to improve clinical practice

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