



Yukon Registered Nurses Association
204-4133-4th Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1H8
Phone: (867) 667-4062 Fax: (867) 668-5123
E-mail: yрна@yкnet.ca Web: www.yрна.ca

The Practice of Nursing in Yukon

Prepared by the Nursing Practice Committee and approved by the Board of YRNA
November 2003

“At the camp there were twenty-four cases of dysentery, mostly young children and babies. All were acutely ill. With this type of diarrhoea the little ones became dehydrated in a matter of a few hours.....The medicine had to be administered every four hours so I set my alarm clock, got up every four hours, and went from tent to tent to be certain that the babies were given the medicine. By the next day there was a remarkable change for the better among the sick children.” (Wilson, 1966, p. 71)

Introduction

Throughout history, people have provided nursing care to those in need. The rush for gold in Yukon in the late nineteenth century brought many newcomers to the territory. With them came new diseases and illnesses stimulating the arrival of doctors and nurses. Initially employed in hospital settings, nurses quickly became prominent in many aspects of health care delivery. The introductory quote describes the community health role of Amy Wilson, a district nurse in Yukon in the early 1950s. By this time, nurses were greatly involved in health promotion, illness prevention, and treatment.

Today, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association (YRNA), established in 1994, has a membership of more than three hundred nurses. Through their many roles, Yukon registered nurses provide comprehensive, innovative, flexible, accessible, and cost-effective health care.

This document describes nursing practice in Yukon through discussion of:

- ✓ definition of nursing
- ✓ educational preparation
- ✓ registration/licensure examination
- ✓ self-regulation
- ✓ standards of practice
- ✓ code of ethics
- ✓ continuum of practice
- ✓ continuing competence
- ✓ nursing practice/roles

This document is a general overview of nursing in Yukon. The reader is directed to documents referenced for more thorough information.

Definition of Nursing

The Registered Nurses Profession Act (Government of Yukon, 1992) defines nursing as,

“the application of professional nursing knowledge or services for compensation for the purpose of:

- (a) promoting, maintaining, and restoring health,
- (b) preventing illness, injury, or disability,
- (c) caring for persons who are sick, injured, disabled, or dying,
- (d) assisting in pre-natal care, childbirth, and post-natal care,



- (e) health teaching and health counseling,
- (f) coordinating health care, or
- (g) engaging in administration, teaching, or research to implement a matter referred to in paragraphs (a) to (f)" (p. 3).

A registered nurse is a nurse whose name appears on the register (Statutes of Yukon, 1992, p.4) maintained by the Yukon Registered Nurses Association. Standards to be met are consistent with the Canadian Registered Nurse Endorsement document agreed to by most provincial/territorial registered nurse regulatory bodies in 2001 (Registrars of the Canadian Regulatory Bodies, 2001) which states:

1. The applicant has acquired the competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities, and judgment) required for entry to practise as a registered nurse in a Canadian jurisdiction.
2. The applicant has met the continuing competence requirements imposed by the jurisdiction in which the nurse is registered/licensed or was most recently registered to practise. (in Yukon 1125 hours in 5 years)
3. The applicant demonstrates the capacity to practise as a registered nurse.
4. The applicant demonstrates good character and ethical professional conduct necessary to practise as a registered nurse.
5. The applicant establishes and confirms identity for entry on to the register. (p. 3-1 to 3-5)

Education

The educational preparation of registered nurses can be viewed as a continuum from basic to advanced proficiency (Alberta Association of Registered Nurses (AARN), 1992).

Initial or basic nursing education incorporates a comprehensive body of knowledge integrating the theory, skills, and art of nursing with:

- ✓ social sciences and humanities
- ✓ basic and health sciences
- ✓ epidemiology and public health related sciences (AARN, 1992).

This broad-based educational background prepares nurses for the diversity and complexity of clients and populations for whom they will provide care (Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), 2002). It also supports the unique role of nursing in the provision of health care.

In Canada, nursing programs are offered primarily at a baccalaureate level, although diploma programs exist. Yukon students must access nursing education outside of the territory, but are encouraged to return to Yukon for clinical experience. At present, a bursary program exists to encourage Yukon residents to enter the field of nursing.

Registration/Licensure Examination

Following successful completion of an approved nursing program, candidates for initial licensure in Canada must pass the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination (CRNE). This examination remains a mandatory component of initial licensure except in Quebec where an alternate licensure exam has been instituted.

In Yukon, all registrations are established through a process of endorsement by another Canadian registered nurse regulatory body, which verifies that the nurse is registered in good standing in that province or territory.

Self-Regulation

In Canada, nursing is a self-regulated profession. The “strength and quality of nursing regulation depends on nurses regulating nursing” (CNA, 2001). With emphasis on ethical values and standards of practice, the licensing/registering body in each jurisdiction oversees regulation of nursing with the fundamental goal of serving and protecting the public (CNA, 2001). In Yukon, the licensing body is the Yukon Registered Nurses Association.

Standards of Practice

As part of its self-regulatory function, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association has developed standards for the practice of nursing in Yukon. The standards include descriptions of nursing practice and outline the desired and acceptable level of performance for all nurses (YRNA, 1995). All nurses practising in Yukon are responsible for knowing the contents of the Standards for Nursing Practice in the Yukon and practising according to those Standards (YRNA, 1995). The functions of the nursing practice standards include:

- ✓ **protection of the public** – standards help protect the public from incompetent, impaired, or unethical nursing practice by outlining minimum standards of nursing practice.
- ✓ **regulation of registered nursing practice** – because YRNA has been granted self-regulatory status, it has the responsibility to monitor the professional practice of its members.
- ✓ **practice consultation** – standards of practice are used by nurses for self-assessment of development and maintenance of their professional practice.
- ✓ **approval of schools of nursing** – standards are used to evaluate nursing education programs
- ✓ **administrative guidelines** – standards are utilized for development of job descriptions, performance appraisal systems, and quality assurance programs.
- ✓ **legal reference** – standards may provide the legal profession with a measure for what a “reasonable and prudent” nurse would do and assist it to interpret scope of practice.
- ✓ **public information** – standards of practice are utilized to inform members of the public and other health professions of the nature of nursing practice (YRNA, 1995).

Code of Ethics

The Yukon Registered Nurses Association has adopted the current Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses established by CNA. In addition to providing guidance to nurses on ethical responsibilities, it informs colleagues and the public of expected ethical commitments by registered nurses (CNA, 2002). The eight primary values central to ethical nursing practice include:

- ✓ **safe, competent, and ethical care** – registered nurses value safe, competent, and ethical nursing care
- ✓ **health and well-being** – registered nurses assist persons to achieve their optimal level of wellness
- ✓ **choice** – registered nurses respect and promote autonomy of clients and support informed decision-making
- ✓ **dignity** – registered nurses value and advocate dignity and respect of all people
- ✓ **confidentiality** – registered nurses safeguard information learned in the context of the professional relationship with a client
- ✓ **justice** – registered nurses value and promote equity and fairness in relationships with clients
- ✓ **accountability** – registered nurses act in a manner “consistent with their professional responsibilities and standards of practice” (CNA, 2002)
- ✓ **quality practice environments** – registered nurses promote and advocate for safe, supportive, and respectful practice environments (CNA, 2002)



Continuum of Practice

Entry-level Registered Nurses begin their practice as novices with a generalist knowledge of principles and theory. Through experience, education, and development of specialized skills, registered nurses test and refine this knowledge base, moving to an advanced level of practice (AARN, 2000). Ongoing learning encompasses any of the following:

- ✓ specialization
- ✓ certification
- ✓ continuing education
- ✓ continuing experience
- ✓ literature *
- ✓ advanced education (i.e. Masters and Doctorate level education)

Continuing Competence

As is the case with all Canadian Registered Nurse regulatory bodies, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association is moving toward a formalized, documented continuing competence program, defined in A National Framework for Continuing Competence Programs for Registered Nurses (CNA, 2000) as “a program that focuses on promoting the maintenance and acquirement of the competence of registered nurses throughout their careers.”

The national framework document defines the concept of continuing competence as:

“The ongoing ability of a registered nurse to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, judgment and personal attributes required to practise safely and ethically in a designated role and setting. Maintaining this ongoing ability involves a continual process linking the code of ethics, standards of practice and life-long learning. The registered nurse reflects on his/her practice on an ongoing basis and takes action to continually improve that practice.” (CNA, 2000)

* literature – individual study of literature related to nursing

Nursing Practice/Roles

Nursing practice is often classified into 4 major domains:

1. clinical practice
2. education
3. research
4. administration

The primary focus of registered nursing is clinical practice in which there is a direct relationship between nurses and clients. All other domains exist to support registered nurses in their clinical practice (CNA, 2002).

The complexity of nursing practice requires that nurses assume a number of roles concurrently and undertake various activities which may include:

- ✓ Caregiver
- ✓ Teacher
- ✓ Client advocate
- ✓ Counselor
- ✓ Community developer
- ✓ Health care manager
- ✓ Policy developer
- ✓ Researcher
- ✓ Consultant
- ✓ Resource manager/planner (AARN, 1992, p. 5).



Registered nurses practice autonomously, but also collaborate with others to provide comprehensive care to clients. Nursing activities, regardless of setting, are directed towards prevention of disease and injury, and/or the promotion, maintenance, or restoration of health across the lifespan, from conception through death.

Conclusion

Registered nurses are the most diversified members of the health care team (Shamian, 1998 as cited in CNA, 2002). Roles in nursing practice may overlap with those of other health care providers, but registered nurses remain distinct and recognizable through their education, licensure and regulation, self-regulatory status, practice standards, focus on ethics, continuing competence, and the diversity of their autonomous and collaborative roles.

Registered Nurses in Yukon have a rich history and culture. Today, nurses practice in a variety of roles and settings. Current emphasis on primary health care provides Yukon registered nurses with the opportunity to use their history and culture to become leaders at local and national levels. They are, and will remain, an integral component of the Yukon health care system.

References

- Alberta Association of Registered Nurses. (2000, June). Entry-to-practice competencies: position paper. AARN: Your Association, 1-9. Retrieved March 18, 2003, from <http://www.nurses.ab.ca/ARNDocs/entrycompetencies.htm>
- Alberta Association of Registered Nurses. (1992, September). Scope of Nursing Practice: position paper. AARN: Your Association, 1-19. Retrieved March 18, 2003, from <http://www.nurses.ab.ca/ARNDocs/Scope%20of%20Nursing%20Practice.htm>
- Canadian Nurses Association. (2000, September). A national framework for continuing competence programs for registered nurses. Ottawa: CNA.
- Canadian Nurses Association. (2002, June). Discussion guide for the unique contribution of the registered nurse. Unpublished manuscript.
- Canadian Nurses Association. (2002, September). Code of ethics for registered nurses. Retrieved April 2, 2003 from <http://www.cna-nurses.ca/pages/ethics/ethics.htm>
- Government of Yukon. (1993, Dec. 31). Yukon Regulations: Registered nurses profession act. Yukon: Queen's Printer for Yukon.
- Government of Yukon. (1992). Statutes of the Yukon: Registered nurses profession act. Yukon: Queen's Printer for the Yukon.
- Registrars of the Canadian Regulatory Bodies (2001, April). Canadian registered nurses endorsement document. Unpublished manuscript.
- Wilson, Amy V. (1966). No man stands alone. Sidney, British Columbia: Gray's Publishing Limited.
- Yukon Registered Nurses Association. (1995, May). Standards for nursing practice in the Yukon. Unpublished manuscript.