

Patient focused outcomes and the role of Nurse Practitioners

NPs provide expert nursing care by working with a high level of clinical decision making expertise based on their wide range of extensive skills and knowledge. Working collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team and having a clearly defined expert scope of practice assists NPs to deliver high quality, effective, patient care which ultimately improves client health outcomes. Extensive national and international studies consistently demonstrate the positive effects of NP performance in relation to improving health access and cost effectiveness to their client population.

Expansion of the Clinical Nursing Career Path

The career opportunities for RNs are changing, due to increasing demand and more significantly because RNs have frequently demonstrated their competence in a variety of extended practice roles.

The NP role provides a much needed addition to the clinical career paths nurses may wish to pursue. NP authorisation ensures nurses have a clinical career pathway that values their clinical expertise and also assists in the retention of nurses in the profession rather than losing skilled nurses to overseas or other careers.

Establishment of Nurse Practitioner positions

Most NPs work within the NSW public health system. Therefore, approval for establishing new NP positions must be obtained from the Area Director of Nursing & Midwifery and endorsement by the AHS Chief Executive.

In order for NPs to work effectively they need multidisciplinary support, adequate infrastructure support and resources.

What is the difference between NPs and RNs?

NPs are competent to:

- Diagnose and treat acute health problems such as infections and minor injuries
- Diagnose, treat and monitor chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension
- Order, perform and interpret specific diagnostic tests
- Possess, supply and prescribe specific formulary medications
- Refer to and accept referrals from other health professionals as necessary.

NPs need to operate within their Guidelines approved by their AHS Chief Executive (or the Director-General).

For further information contact:

Nursing & Midwifery Office
NSW Health
Tel. (02) 9391 9490
Fax. (02) 9391 9468

www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing/npract.html

Nurse Practitioners and Midwife Practitioners in NSW



What is a Nurse Practitioner or a Midwife Practitioner?

Nurse Practitioners (NP) or Midwife Practitioners¹ (MP) are Registered Nurses (RN) or Registered Midwives (RM) who have satisfied the requirements of the Nurses and Midwives Board of NSW (NMB) to be authorised.

Once authorisation has taken place the NP or MP may prescribe medications, order diagnostic tests and make limited referrals, only whilst operating within approved scope of practice/clinical practice guidelines. RNs/RMs can use the protected title of "Nurse Practitioner" or "Midwife Practitioner".

NPs work at an advanced practice level that demands:

- Expert clinical knowledge
- Advanced specialised education
- Complex decision making skills

Being an expert-by-experience in a specialty is not on its own sufficient for progression to NP or MP status. Nor is accepting more delegated medical tasks or technical procedures. NPs or MPs have extensive experience, skills and knowledge in their chosen speciality and work in partnership with members of the healthcare team.

The Australian College of Midwives draft position statement about Midwife Practitioners is available at:

<http://www.nswmidwives.com.au/aboutus/professionalissues/tabid/104/default.aspx>

¹ The term nurse Practitioner will also refer to midwife Practitioner where appropriate.

Development of the role in NSW

The development of the NP role in Australia is a reflection of several years planning based on extensive consultation and evidence available in Australia and internationally. In Australia initial planning of the NP role began towards the end of 1980s.

A pilot project in 1995 shaped the future for NPs and provided a platform for advancing career opportunities for experienced nurses and by addressing inequities in access to healthcare for the population. Extensive national and international research has demonstrated that the NP role is safe, effective and highly acceptable to the patient population.

In October 1999 the *Nurses Act* was amended to make provision for the NP role in NSW. The first NPs were authorised in December 2000.

The NP role has emerged as a new level and model of care provider due to increasing specialisation and the requirement to address increasing inequity in access to health care.

Where do Nurse Practitioners work?

In NSW, NPs work primarily within Area Health Services (AHS) in hospitals, ambulatory settings, mobile clinics, and community health centres.

They work in a range of specialties across rural/remote and urban settings.

Examples of domains of clinical areas include –

- Primary Health Care
- Women's Health
- Generalist Remote Areas
- Emergency – adults & paediatrics
- Mental Health
- Neonatology
- ICU
- Renal
- Paediatric Orthopaedics
- Pain Management – adult and paediatric
- Cardiac Rehabilitation
- Aged Care
- Genetics
- Diabetes
- Midwife Practitioner



How can I become a Nurse Practitioner?

The Nurses & Midwives Board NSW administers the authorisation process for Nurse and Midwife Practitioners. Application details (including criteria) can be obtained from the NMB website:

www.nmb.nsw.gov.au