

Status of Advanced Practice Nursing in New Zealand

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Population of New Zealand: 4,793,700 (June 2017)

Nurse Practitioner

The nurse practitioner (NP) role was introduced in New Zealand in 2001, with the first NP registered in 2001 and steadily the numbers have grown (Nursing Council of New Zealand [NCNZ], 2017). Currently there are 260 registered NPs in NZ. The NP role is recognised internationally in over 40 other countries.

The NP nursing model of practice offers an alternative and highly effective model of health care delivery in line with the *2016 New Zealand Health Strategy Future Direction vision* (Ministry of Health [MOH], 2016). NPs are an instrumental and valuable resource to “*All New Zealanders live well, stay well, get well, in a system that is people-powered, provides services closer to home, is designed for value and high performance, and works as one team in a smart system*” (MOH, 2016).

NZ NPs are regulated under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. NZ NPs until recently, have either specialised across a broad range of areas whilst other NPs have maintained a broad area of practice. Specialised NPs offer a consultative service and direct clinical care to complex clients. Those NPs who maintain a broad area of practice may include primary health care or general practice across the lifespan, mental health and older persons health.

In April 2017 the NCNZ made changes to the NP scope of practice and education programmes, with the scope of practice now being broadened and the requirement to restrict NPs to a specific area of practice removed (2017a).

Instead, the expectation is for the advanced clinician to self-regulate their own practice within their area of expertise, experience and competence. The removal of previous restrictions allows these advanced clinicians to have greater flexibility and utilise available resources to target current and future health needs of all New Zealanders, including those in rural and underserved populations. In addition, the revised scope of NP practice addresses two other issues. Firstly, the NP role is clearer to understand for employers and the public and secondly, the revised role differentiates the NP from other advanced registered nurse roles (NCNZ, 2017a).

Additionally, to support consistency and breadth in nurse practitioner preparation a focussed education programme pathway has been introduced with more specific learning outcomes and clinical learning time. These education modifications are anticipated to improve NP readiness for registration upon completion of the programme (NCNZ, 2017b).

New scope of practice for nurse practitioners from April 2017

“Nurse practitioners have advanced education, clinical training and the demonstrated competence and legal authority to practise beyond the level of a registered nurse. Nurse practitioners work autonomously and in collaborative teams with other health professionals to promote health, prevent disease, and improve access and population health outcomes for a specific patient group or community. Nurse practitioners manage episodes of care as the lead healthcare provider in partnership with health consumers and their families/whānau. Nurse practitioners combine advanced nursing knowledge and skills with diagnostic

reasoning and therapeutic knowledge to provide patient-centred healthcare services including the diagnosis and management of health consumers with common and complex health conditions. They provide a wide range of assessment and treatment interventions, ordering and interpreting diagnostic and laboratory tests, prescribing medicines within their area of competence and admitting and discharging from hospital and other healthcare services/settings. As clinical leaders, they work across healthcare settings and influence health service delivery and the wider profession” (NCNZ, 2017c).

Critical Mass and Future Nursing Workforce

Numerous nursing cohort reports, workforce statistics and projections (2010-2035) can be found at:

<http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Publications/Reports-and-workforce-statistics>

Regulation and Education

Much consultation has been undertaken on the NP scope of practice and education programme (NCNZ, 2014). To register in the NP scope of practice, certain criteria and qualifications are required:

- Registration with the Nursing Council of New Zealand in the registered nurse scope of practice; and
- a minimum of four years of experience in an area of practice; and
- the completion of an approved clinical master’s degree programme for the nurse practitioner scope of practice. The programme must include relevant theory and a minimum of 300 hours of clinical learning; and/or
- the completion of an equivalent overseas clinically focused master’s degree qualification which meets the requirements specified in c. above; and
- passing an assessment against the nurse practitioner competencies by a Council approved panel

The themes of competence for the NP scope of practice are:

- Provides safe and accountable advanced practice
- Assesses, diagnoses, plans, implements and evaluates care
- Works in partnership with health consumers
- Works collaboratively with health care teams
- Works to improve the quality and outcomes of healthcare (NCNZ, 2017c)

Continuing Competence

Every three years NPs are required to provide evidence of continued competence (NCNZ, 2017c), when applying for their annual practising certificate. The evidence includes:

- Ongoing peer review of their prescribing practice by an authorised prescriber; and
- At least 40 hours per year of professional development over a 3-year period; and
- At least 40 days per year of ongoing nursing practice as NP over a 3-year period.

Prescribing Authority

NZ NPs have arguably some of the broadest prescribing rights in the world and are authorised to prescribe under the Medicines Act 1981. As well as carrying out tasks and activities previously done by medical practitioners, NPs also have the same prescribing rights as medical practitioners in New Zealand (Ministry of Health [MOH], 2017). The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977 allows NPs to prescribe Class A, B and C controlled drugs (CDs) within their scope of practice. This includes Class A and B CDs for up to one month's supply and up to three months' supply for Class C CDs.

Registered Nurse Prescribing

As well as NPs prescribing, since 6 July 2017 there has been introduction of registered nurse (RN) prescribing (NCNZ, 2017). Introduction of the Medicines (Designated Prescriber) – Registered Nurses Prescribing in Community Health where under sections 105 and 105B of the New Zealand Medicines Act 1981 and the Medicines (Designated Prescriber – Registered Nurses) Regulations 2016, the NCNZ entitles RNs to prescribe prescription medicines as per the NCNZ website: www.nursingcouncil.org.nz.

Two classes of RN prescribing authority exist under the regulation introduced 20 September 2017, under the Medicines Act 1981, allowing RNs to prescribe.

1. *“RN prescribing in primary health and specialty teams -prescribe from a schedule of common medicines for common and long-term conditions*
2. *Registered nurse prescribing in community health -prescribe from a limited schedule of medicines. This is being trialled in 2017” (NCNZ, 2017d)*

Again, there are specific RN criteria, education and training requirements for prescribing in these classes – see more at <http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Publications/Gazette-notices>

Reading

What is a NP

<http://www.nurse.org.nz/what-is-a-np-general-information.html>

Nurse practitioners in New Zealand – Ministry of Health

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/nursing/nurses-new-zealand/nurse-practitioners-new-zealand>

Nurse Practitioners New Zealand

<http://www.nurse.org.nz/npnz-nurse-practitioners-nz.html>

New Zealand Health Strategy <http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/new-zealand-health-strategy-futuredirection-2016-apr16.pdf>

Prescribing Background Reading

Medical Council of New Zealand. (2017). Good Prescribing Practise. Retrieved from the World Wide Web

<http://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/News-and-Publications/Statements/Good-prescribing-practice.pdf>

Medsafe is the current New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority

<http://www.medsafe.govt.nz>

The Health Quality and Safety Commission www.hqsc.govt.nz

World Health Organisation. (1994). Guide to good prescribing: A practical manual. Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.who.int/dsa/cat98/PharmCat2002.pdf?ua=1>

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