Standards for recertification programmes in registered nurse prescribing in community health

Introduction

The Nursing Council has proposed that suitably qualified registered nurses practising in community health settings\(^1\) be able to prescribe a limited number of medicines for minor ailments and illnesses to enhance the health services they are able to deliver and make it easier for patients to obtain the medicines they need.

The potential health conditions for this type of prescribing include common skin conditions such as simple eczema, impetigo, fungal infections and parasites, common aches and pain, ear infections, sore throats and rheumatic fever prophylaxis and ongoing treatment, common forms of contraception and the treatment of common sexually transmitted infections, urinary tract infections and constipation. Nurses would prescribe medicines from a limited list of first line medicines for the common health conditions relevant to their practice context and agreed with their employer. The patients would be normally healthy people without significant health problems (co-morbidities\(^2\))

The Council has set standards for recertification programmes for registered nurse prescribing in community health that enables regional or national organisations with the necessary clinical governance to be accredited to provide such programmes. This document sets out the standards for these programmes. This approach is to be piloted in 2016.

\(^{1}\) Registered nurses working in schools, general practice, public health, wellchild services, Maori and Pacific Health providers, services for youth, family planning, sexual health and district nursing and other ambulatory and home based services.

\(^{2}\) For example heart disease, genetic disorders, diabetes, cancer, thyroid disease, alcohol and drug addiction, mental illness, asthma, glaucoma, arthritis, allergies, stomach problems, tuberculosis, high blood pressure
1 Clinical governance

1.1 The organisation is a national or regional organisation that has the commitment and resources to support registered nurse prescribing in community health in collaboration with other providers.

1.2 The organisation will have an identified senior nurse responsible for registered nurse prescribing in community health including developing, implementing and monitoring the structures, policy and process to support safe prescribing.

1.3 The organisation will have policies and procedures that support registered nurse prescribing in community health including mentorship, continuing professional development and audit processes.

1.4 The organisation will have a Drug and Therapeutics governing group to provide expert advice and guidance on the safe prescribing of medicines for registered nurse prescribing in community health and provide risk management of adverse events and medication errors.

1.5 The organisation will have decision support tools consistent with National guidelines for registered nurse prescribing in community health.

1.6 The organisation will have a performance management and appropriate PDRP (Professional development and recognition programme) or credentialing system for nurses.

2 Education programme

2.1 The entry criteria for the programme must be in keeping with the Council’s requirement for registered nurses prescribing in community health to have completed 3 FTE years of clinical practice with at least one year in the area of practice she/he will be prescribing in New Zealand.

2.2 All nurses undertaking the programme must have a current practising certificate. Any concerns related to competence, conduct or health must be managed by the organisation and referred to Council if they affect the nurse’s ability to prescribe.

2.3 The aim of the education programme is to prepare registered nurses to prescribe from the lists of community nurse medicines safely and appropriate including the legal, ethical and practical considerations and the basic principles of therapeutics and pharmokinetics that underpin community nurse prescribing. It will be located in the New Zealand context.
2.4 The content for programme leading to registered nurse prescribing in community health will include:

- Underpinning legislation, schedules of medicines, access to subsidies, ethical obligations;
- Pharmacology related to prescribing for minor ailments and illnesses; access to information on medicines;
- Safety of drugs across the lifespan;
- Antimicrobial resistance and prescriber responsibilities;
- Pharmacology and prescribing of contraception;
- Clinical assessment in relation to prescribing including other medical conditions and medicines;
- Writing a prescription;
- Working with the patient, using health literacy skills to appropriately select and educate them about their medicines; and
- Responsibilities for documentation and communication with the healthcare team; and
- Identifying and accessing clinical pathways, protocols and decision support tools to inform clinical decisions.

2.5 The Programme will have the following learning outcomes for the registered nurse:

- Demonstrates understanding of the underpinning legislation, schedules of medicines, access to subsidies, ethical obligations
- Demonstrates knowledge of antimicrobial resistance and prescriber responsibilities
- Demonstrates knowledge of the safety of drugs across the lifespan
- Demonstrates knowledge of pharmacology and prescribing of relevant medications
- Demonstrates understanding and application of drug actions, interactions and side effects/adverse reactions in registered nurse prescribing in community health
- Demonstrates competence in taking a history, reviewing documentation and assessing minor ailments and health conditions including clinical assessment that identifies other medical conditions and medicines
- Demonstrates competence in identifying the probable condition/health need
- Identifies and accesses clinical pathways, protocols and decision support tools to inform clinical decisions
- Demonstrates optimal prescription writing
- Prescribes safely and appropriately
- Documents and communicates prescribing decisions; and knows the limit of their prescribing practice and when to refer
- Demonstrates working with the patient, using health literacy skills to appropriately select and educate them about their medicines; and
- Demonstrates responsibility for documentation and communication with the healthcare team
3 Supervision in Practice

3.1 The organisation will provide adequate supervision to prepare the registered nurse to prescribe within 6 months of completing the education programme. During this time the nurse will focus on the assessment, diagnosis and patient consultation with a mentor.

3.2 The prescribing mentor will be a medical or nurse practitioner or a suitably qualified senior nurse.

4 Credentialing/Assessment process

4.1 The programme will have clearly defined assessment processes.

4.2 The assessment process is valid and reliable.

4.3 Confidentiality requirements for clients, family and employees are met.

4.4 The assessment is undertaken by health professionals who are prepared and understand the principles of work based assessment.

4.5 Criteria used for assessment are made available to applicants.

4.6 Applicants have opportunity for self-assessment.

4.7 Applicants receive individual feedback.

5 Continuing competence requirements

5.1 The organisation must monitor the continuing competence of registered nurse prescribing in community health by ensuring they currently prescribe, undertake regular professional development to update their prescribing knowledge and undertake regular peer review, audit or credentialing of their prescribing practice.

5.2 Continuing competence requirements are to be monitored and reported to the Council three yearly.

5.3 The organisation must maintain a database of nurses (names, registration numbers and assessment dates) on the recertification programme.

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3 Must have completed a mentor or preceptor course and have expertise in the clinical area.
Competencies for registered nurse prescribing in community health

1. Understands the relevant regulatory frameworks, local guidelines and policies and how medicines are monitored and licensed.

2. Has appropriate clinical knowledge including signs and symptoms of minor conditions and infections, clinical pharmacology, including the effects of co-morbidity. Has knowledge of drug doses, side effects and drug interactions for prescribing in community health.

3. Demonstrates the ability to assess patients’ clinical condition/s and identify and prioritises patient problems. Makes accurate provisional diagnoses and generates appropriate treatment options.

4. Undertakes appropriate and comprehensive history taking including medical, social and medication history, including over the counter and complementary medicines.

5. Is able to document appropriate, legible, accurate prescriptions and clinical documentation and is able to use adverse reaction reporting mechanisms.

6. Explains the principles behind prescribing and how they are applied to practice including the cost and effects of prescribing practice.

7. Demonstrates the ability to make appropriate prescribing decisions by analysing the appropriate information. Aware of need to monitor response to medication and lifestyle advice.

8. Effectively communicates with patients and other team members and in partnership develops a dynamic clinical management plan. Advises patient on any risks, expected effects, and potential side effects.

9. Understands the principles of prescribing audit, reflective practice and can identify continuing professional development needs.

10. Recognises own limits and refers and consults with others as required.