Consultation on the two proposals for registered nurse prescribing

This is submission is made by Women’s Health Action Trust
to the Nursing Council of New Zealand

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Due: April 2013
Consultation: Two proposals for registered nurse prescribing

Submission Form

Please read and refer to the consultation document two proposals for registered nurse prescribing available on the Nursing Council of New Zealand website www.nursingcouncil.org.nz before completing this form. The questions in this form are designed to help you to focus your response and make it easier for us to analyse submissions. However, you don’t have to answer every question and may add additional comments.

This submission was completed by:

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Organisation:  Womens’ Health Action
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If an email address is supplied, we will notify you of when the report of the summary of submissions is published on-line.

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The deadline for feedback is Friday 19 April 2013. Submissions are accepted in written and email form. Please save and send your submission to:

EmmaG@nursingcouncil.org.nz

Or post to:

Emma Gennard
Nursing Council of New Zealand
PO Box 9644, Wellington 6141
**Women’s Health Action Trust**

Women’s Health Action, which was formed as a result of the Cartwright enquiry, is in its 27th year of operation and remains on the forefront of women’s health in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Women’s Health Action is a women’s health promotion, information and consumer advisory service working nationally and regionally. We are a non-government organisation that works with health professionals, policy makers and other not for profit organisations to influence and inform government policy and service delivery for women.

We provide quality, evidence-based, consumer-focused information and advice to ensure health policy and service delivery meets the needs of diverse women and has intended and equitable outcomes. We have extensive networks in the public health and not-for-profit sector and provide information, analysis and advice to health providers, NGOs, DHBs, the Ministry of Health and other public agencies on women’s health including screening, public health, gender and consumer issues.

Womens health action has a special focus on breastfeeding promotion and support, as well as on women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on this proposal.
Introduction

Women’s Health Action supports the extension of nurse prescribing to suitably qualified nurses.

We wish to make the following comments.

- Re Proposal One: Community Nurse prescribing

We agree that extending the role of nurses working in specific ambulatory services would enhance community and outpatient services. We would expect that such nurses would be given additional training in the prescribing of medicines and being able to offer comprehensive explanations about the medicines prescribed in order to obtain the patient’s informed consent.

- Re Proposal Two: Specialist Nurse prescribing

We agree that registered nurses who are experienced and skilled and working in clinics as part of a team should be able to prescribe medicines for certain conditions. We also agree that obtaining postgraduate qualification in this field should be mandatory.
Consultation questions

The consultation questions are split into two parts specific to the two proposals. Respondents are asked to reply to questions about both proposals. There is an opportunity at the end of the questions to give general views on the consultation paper and models of nurse prescribing.

Proposal One: Community nurse prescribing

Proposal for community nurse prescribing

The Council believes that registered nurses working in schools, general practice, public health, Maori and Pacific Health providers, services for youth, family planning and other ambulatory services already have a significant role in health promotion, disease prevention and in the assessment and treatment of minor ailments and illnesses. The ability to prescribe a limited number of medicines would enhance the health services registered nurses are able to deliver to some patients in community and outpatient settings.

1.1 Do you agree with the proposal that suitably qualified and experienced registered nurses be able to prescribe a limited list of medicines to treat minor ailments and infections, and to promote health?

Yes ☒ No ☐

WHA agrees that suitably qualified and experienced registered nurses should be able to prescribe a limited list of medicines to treat minor ailments.

The rationale for extending nurse prescribing is to improve patient care without compromising patient safety; make it easier for patients to obtain the medicines they need; increase patient choice in accessing medicines; and make better use of the skills of health professionals.

1.2 Do you agree that community nurse prescribing will enable patients to receive more accessible, timely and convenient care?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Research appears to indicate that extending the scope of practice of suitably qualified nurses will improve health care provision.

¹ Health services provided on an outpatient basis to those who visit a hospital or another health care facility and depart after treatment on the same day.
Title for community nurse prescribing

The Council has used the title “community nurse prescribing” for this proposal but is aware that it may not best describe the nurses who may undertake this type of prescribing or the breadth of the prescribing authority.

1.3 Do you consider the title “community nurse prescribing” adequately describes and informs the public and other health professionals of the breadth of this prescribing authority?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Somewhat. The title appears adequate but we suggest this is canvassed with public outside of health sector.

Scope of practice and authorisation for community nurse prescribing

The Council is proposing to add the following sentence to the scope of practice for registered nurses to allow some registered nurses to be authorised for community nurse prescribing:

“Some nurses with additional experience education and training may be authorised by the Council to prescribe some medicines within their competence and area of practice.”

1.4 Do you agree with the suggested wording changes to the registered nurse scope of practice and with a prescribing authorisation being included in the scope of practice of registered nurses with community nursing prescribing authority?

Yes [X] No [ ]

WHA agrees with the proposed wording change to include a prescribing authorisation.

Qualification and training for community nurse prescribing

It is proposed that community nurse prescribing courses should include up to 6 days of theory (online and workshop) and 3 days of prescribing practice with a doctor or nurse prescriber (authorised prescriber). A competence assessment with a doctor or nurse practitioner would be one of the course assessments that must be successfully completed before the nurse would be authorised by the Council to prescribe. The standards for community nurse prescriber courses are outlined on page 50 of the consultation document. The competencies that the registered nurse will be assessed against are on page 53.

1.5 Do you agree that the proposed education and training for community nurse prescribing is consistent with their scope of practice and their prescribing authority and will enable them to demonstrate competent and safe prescribing practice?
We support the provision of additional training and the requirement that the nurse has been in practice for at least 3 years.
We think the course standards and competencies require improvement to be made more consumer focused.
In particular, “Educating the patient” is mentioned but the course standards but does not go far enough as there are no specific details about an informed consent process in regards to ensuring who is prescribing and what is being prescribed. Nor does this ensure that consumers are engaged in understanding the treatment prescribed and that it is being prescribed by a nurse.
This also needs to be detailed in the competencies section.

Entry criteria for courses leading to community nurse prescribing

The Council is proposing the following criteria to gain entry to a community nurse prescribing programme:

- The registered nurse must hold a current annual practising certificate and must have completed three years equivalent full time practice. At least one year must be in the area of practice she/he will be prescribing.
- The nurse must have support from his/her employer to undertake the prescribing course and must confirm that they will be able to prescribe in their work role at the completion of the course.
- The nurse must have the support of an identified authorised prescriber mentor who will support her/him to prescribe.
- The nurse must be employed by an organisation that supports nurse prescribing through policy, audit, peer review and accessibility of continuing education.

1.8 Do you agree with the entry criteria for community nurse prescribing courses?

We have no objection to the entry criteria.
Continuing competence and monitoring for community nurse prescribing

It is proposed that nurses who have community nurse prescribing rights be required to participate in peer review of their prescribing practice and complete professional development on prescribing each year (e.g. a community nurse prescriber’s update). Community nurse prescribers must also be able to demonstrate that they have completed 60 days of prescribing practice within the past three years. The Council is proposing that it monitors that these requirements are met every 3 years at practising certificate renewal.

1.9 Do you agree with the ongoing continuing competence requirements for community nurse prescribers?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Please note comments above.

Indicative list of medicines for community nurse prescribing

The medicines lists for community nurses were developed from the New Zealand Formulary and Pharmaceutical Schedule for medicines to treat identified therapeutic areas. The lists contain commonly used medicines for minor ailments, prevention of disease, common skin conditions and infections and contraceptives. Please refer to the lists on page 21 of the consultation document.

1.10 Do you agree with the proposed list of prescription medicines that nurses with community prescribing rights will be able to prescribe as designated prescribers?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Yes- however, we note that medical staff currently experience significant marketing pressure from Pharmaceutical companies in regards to prescription medications. We are concerned that safeguards be put in place to ensure nurses are not subject to the same pressures?

Non prescription medicines will not be included in the regulation but patients may be able to access a subsidy if the item is “prescribed” by a nurse with community nurse prescribing authority.

1.11 Do you agree that community nurse prescribers should be able to access this list of non prescription medicines?

Yes ☒ No ☐

We agree this will be helpful to consumers on limited incomes.
Proposal Two: Specialist nurse prescribing

Proposal for specialist nurse prescribing

The Council is proposing that registered nurses with advanced skills and knowledge who work in specialty services (e.g. diabetes services) or expert nurses working in general practice teams in the community be authorised to prescribe medicines for patients who have common conditions e.g. asthma, diabetes, hypertension. They would work as part of a collaborative multidisciplinary team and manage and monitoring patients with these conditions in clinics or by providing home based care. They will seek assistance from a doctor within the team when making difficult or complex clinical decisions.

2.1 Do you agree with the proposal that suitably qualified and experienced registered nurses be able to prescribe from the specialist and community nurse prescribing lists of medicines?

Yes ☒ No ☐

The ability of specialist nurses to prescribe will mean that they can make a greater contribution to patient care particularly in chronic or long term condition management. Prescribing authority will ensure competence and accountability for the medication decisions specialist nurses make and be convenient for patients who will no longer have to see a doctor for routine monitoring and prescriptions.

2.2 Do you agree that specialist nurse prescribing will enable patients to receive more accessible, timely and convenient care?

Yes ☒ No ☐

We agree that suitably qualified and experienced nurses with advanced skills and knowledge should be able to prescribe medications for patients who have long term conditions.

We agree research indicates specialist nurse prescribing has the potential to improve health care.

Title for specialist nurse prescribing

The Council has used the title “specialist nurse prescribing” for this proposal but is aware that it may not best describe the nurses who may undertake this type of prescribing (some of whom may be generalist practice or rural nurses) and could be confused with nurses who do not prescribe or have different roles eg clinical nurse specialists.

2.3 Do you consider the title “specialist nurse prescribing” adequately describes and informs the public and other health professionals of the breadth of this prescribing authority?

Yes ☒ No ☐
The Council is proposing that nurses with specialist nurse prescribing authority work in a collaborative relationship within a multidisciplinary team. Specialist nurse prescribers will refer a patient who has a health concern or complexity which is beyond their level of competence to a doctor. The Council believes that ongoing supervision by a medical mentor is unnecessary as specialist nurses must work within a team and within their level of competence.

2.4 Do you agree that nurses with specialist nurse prescribing authority should be required to work in a collaborative multidisciplinary team?
Yes ☒ No ☐

2.5 Do you think that nurses with specialist nurse prescribing authority should also be required to practice under supervision for six months when they begin to prescribe?
Yes ☒ No ☐

We agree the requirement to work in a multidisciplinary team would provide the optimum care environment. However, we also note that in some areas the multidisciplinary team may consist of medical and nursing staff only and this should not limit the specialist nurses capacity to prescribe.

We agree with the title, and with the requirement to practice under supervision for the first six months.

Scope of practice for specialist nurse prescribing

The Council is consulting on two options for specialist nurse prescribing. The first is to introduce a new scope of practice – specialist nurse prescriber. The second option is for specialist nurse prescribing to be included as an authorisation in a registered nurse’s scope of practice. The first option would more clearly inform the public and other health professionals of the qualification and skills of a nurse with this prescribing authority. The second option may reduce expectations of increased remuneration and would be more acceptable to nursing organisations.

2.6 Do you agree that nurses who apply for specialist nurse prescribing authority should be:
☒ a) registered in a new scope of practice; or
☐ b) have a condition/authorisation included in the registered nurse scope of practice

2.7 If nurses with specialist nurse prescribing authority are registered in a specialist nurse prescriber scope of practice, do you agree with the scope statement on page 34 of the consultation document?

2 Under section 22 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, the Council may change a scope of practice and state the health services a nurse is able to perform.
2.8 If nurses with prescribing authority have a condition/authorisation, do you agree with the proposed additional wording in the registered nurse scope of practice?

"Some nurses with additional experience education and training may be authorised by the Council to prescribe some medicines within their competence and area of practice."

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Registered in a new scope of practice because we believe this will provide clarity for healthcare consumers.

We believe more work is required on the scope statement to ensure it is patient/consumer centred and that multi disciplinary team be defined in a way that allows flexibility for healthcare services which have only medical and nursing staff working in them.

**Qualification and training for specialist nurse prescribing**

The Council is proposing that specialist nurse prescribers complete a post graduate diploma in specialist nurse prescribing. The programme would be pathophysiology of common conditions, assessment and clinical decision making (diagnosis), pharmacology and prescribing praxis which would include 150 hours of supervised practice with a designated medical prescriber. The standards for specialist nurse prescriber courses are outlined on page 54 of the consultation document. The Council is proposing that nurses applying for specialist nurse prescribing rights must have satisfactorily completed this qualification including an assessment of their competence to prescribe (see competencies on page 64) by the medical mentor before being authorised to prescribe.

2.9 Do you agree that the proposed education and training for specialist nurse prescribing is consistent with their scope of practice and their prescribing authority and will enable them to demonstrate competent and safe prescribing practice?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2.10 Do you agree with the standards for accreditation of courses for specialist nurse prescribing?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2.11 Do you agree with the proposed competencies for specialist nurse prescribers?

Yes [ ] No [ ]
Entry criteria

The Council is proposing that the registered nurse must meet the following criteria before gaining entry to a prescribing programme:

- The registered nurse must hold a current annual practising certificate and must have completed three years equivalent full time practice. At least one year must be in the area of practice she/he will be prescribing.
- The registered nurse must have support from her employer to undertake the Postgraduate diploma in specialist nurse prescribing and must confirm that they will be able to prescribe in their work role at the completion of the course.
- The registered nurse must have the support of an identified prescriber mentor who will support her/him to prescribe.
- The registered nurse must be employed by an organisation that supports nurse prescribing through policy, audit, peer review and accessibility of continuing education.

2.12 Do you agree with the entry criteria for specialist nurse prescribing programme?

Yes [x]  No [ ]

Yes we agree with the proposals for education and training for specialist nurses including the competencies and entry criteria

Continuing competence and monitoring

The Council proposes that nurses who have specialist nurse prescribing rights be required to undertake regular case review of their prescribing practice with a suitable mentor and complete professional development hours each year on prescribing within the 60 hours of professional development completed by all nurses every three years. Specialist nurse prescribers must also be able to demonstrate that they have completed 60 days of prescribing practice within the past three years. The Council is proposing that it monitors that these requirements are met every 3 years.

2.13 Do you agree with the continuing competence requirements for specialist nurse prescribers?

Yes [x]  No [ ]

Yes we agree with the continuing competency requirements
Proposed list of prescription medicines for specialist nurse prescribing

The list contains commonly used medicines for common condition and is not an inclusive list. Please note the prescription medicines for community nurse prescribing on page 40 of the consultation document will also be included in the list for specialist nurse prescribers.

The Council is considering whether it is necessary to identify some medicines that specialist nurses may not initiate but could safely repeat prescribe. For example antipsychotic medicines.

2.14 Do the indicative community nurse prescribing and specialist nurse prescribing lists of prescription medicines reflect the range of medicines that nurses with specialist nurse prescribing rights will need to access?

Yes [x] No [ ]

See below.

2.15 Do the prescription medicine lists include any medicines that specialist nurse prescribers should not be able to access?

Yes [x] No [ ]

We do not think antidepressant medication should be prescribed by either nurses or GPs who do not have some postgraduate training in mental health care.

2.16 Do you think there are medicines that specialist nurses should not initiate but could safely repeat prescribe?

Yes [x] No [ ]

Yes, including those prescribed by a specialist for long term conditions.

Non prescription medicines

Non prescription medicines will not be included in the regulation but patients may be able to access a subsidy if the item is “prescribed” by a nurse with specialist nurse prescribing authority.

2.17 Do you agree that specialist nurse prescribers should be able to access the list of non prescription medicines on page 43 of the consultation document?

Yes [x] No [ ]
We think the list of non prescription medications is acceptable also see previous comment re this.

List of Controlled drugs for specialist nurse prescribing

Designated nurse prescribers are already able to prescribe from a list of 42 controlled drugs outlined in the Misuse of Drugs Regulation 1977 (see Appendix 7 on page 71 of the consultation document). The Council believes that some of the controlled drugs on the present list are no longer used or fall outside the therapeutic areas it has identified for specialist nurse prescribers. It is proposing a list of 15 controlled drugs for specialist nurse prescribing (see page 44).

Designated nurse prescribers are restricted to prescribing controlled drugs only for patients under their care, only in an emergency and only a 3 day supply (Misuse of Drugs Regulation 1977 Section 21 (4B)).

2.18 Do you agree with the proposed list of controlled drugs that nurses with specialist nurse prescribing rights will be able to prescribe as designated prescribers?

Yes □ No □

While we agree with nurse prescribing of opioid analgesia in an emergency for no longer than 3 days we do not agree with extending this period or with nurse prescription of benzodiazepines in any circumstances.

We also note both of these types of these medications have been found to be highly addictive and GPs have complained about being put under extreme pressure to prescribe them at times. It would be important to have some mechanisms to protect both consumers and specialist nurses from any misuse of these medications especially when they may be prescribed in the context of home based visits.

2.19 Do you think that specialist nurse prescribers should be able to prescribe controlled drugs (from the appropriate list) for a period longer than three days?

Yes □ No □

We do not agree with the prescribing of controlled drugs for longer than 3 days.
Other comments

3.1 Do you have any other comments on the consultation paper or the proposed models of nurse prescribing?

Concluding comments

In summary, Women’s Health action supports the proposal that Registered nurses with appropriate experience, additional education, clinical knowledge and skills who have been authorized to do so (or who have achieved the appropriate credentials) be able to prescribe certain medications.

We also support the intent of these changes, which is to make treatment more accessible to consumers. However, healthcare consumers require protection and the assurance that their care will be safe. We believe public understanding of expanded nursing roles needs to be built into patient information and informed consent procedures so that health consumers know who is prescribing the medications and that they are competent (credentialed or authorized) to do so. We also believe the additional training requirements are extremely important and must be clearly described in any legislative changes.

Consumer movements have demanded more responsive and consumer centred health services and has challenged medical dominance in health care. This has contributed to the professional recognition and autonomy of nurses as health practitioners in their own right and contributed to an environment of expanding practice for nurses. The involvement of consumers in changes to health systems and the health professions is important. We urge you to ensure that these consultations make meaningful attempts to engage with consumers’ perspectives on this important proposal to expand nursing practice.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. We trust our comments are useful in your consideration.

Thank you for completing this response form. Please save and send your submission to:

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Or post to:

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