

Competencies for

Registered Nurse Prescribing



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Background

The College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) is the regulatory body for nursing in Ontario. Through provincial government legislation (*Nursing Act, 1991* and *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*), CNO is accountable to protect the public by ensuring nurses in Ontario practice safely, competently and ethically.

This document outlines the competencies that Registered Nurses (RNs) require to prescribe medications and communicate a diagnosis for the purpose of prescribing. To gain this authority, RNs need to complete education approved by CNO Council.

The competencies describe the knowledge, skill, judgement and attributes that an RN requires to safely, effectively and ethically communicate diagnoses and prescribe medications. CNO's review process ensures RN prescribing education integrates and teaches these competencies.

Assumptions

The competencies are based on the following assumptions:

- i. RN prescribing is grounded in the values, knowledge and theories of professional nursing practice.
- ii. RN entry-level competencies are the foundation for nursing practice. The RN prescribing competencies build upon and are informed by the entry-level competencies required of an RN.
- iii. RNs must successfully complete CNO-approved education to become qualified to prescribe medication and communicate diagnoses for the purpose of prescribing.
- iv. RNs who are authorized to prescribe must comply with the *RN Prescribing practice standard* and laws, other CNO standards, and guidelines that apply to nursing practice more broadly. For example, RNs who prescribe medication will also be accountable for expectations related, but not limited, to:
 - *Code of Conduct*
 - *Medication*
 - *Documentation*
 - *Consent*
- v. RNs who are authorized to prescribe must comply with practice setting laws and policies applying to RN prescribing practice.
- vi. RNs work in collaboration with other health care providers to provide safe, ethical and competent care.

Competencies

Professional responsibilities and accountabilities

1. Demonstrates understanding of the legislated scope of practice of the RN who prescribes, including relevant laws, CNO standards and guidelines.
2. Demonstrates understanding of professional accountability associated with prescribing and communicating a diagnosis, including awareness that these accountabilities cannot be delegated to another individual.
3. Demonstrates ethical decision-making when prescribing medication.
4. Demonstrates understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the RN who prescribes within the healthcare team.
5. Clearly articulates the role of the RN who prescribes when interacting with the client.
6. Recognizes when the client's health care needs—at any point during assessment, diagnosis or treatment—are beyond the scope, skills, knowledge and competencies of the RN who prescribes, and thus collaborates, consults with, or transfers accountability for care to another health care provider.
7. Manages expectations and pressure to prescribe from multiple sources.
8. Demonstrates understanding of Health Canada reporting requirements for adverse drug reactions.
9. Documents relevant aspects of client care in the client record.
10. Contributes to the development, implementation and evaluation of organizational policies and processes approaches for safe prescribing practices.
11. Obtains informed consent explaining the risks and benefits of, and the rationale of proposed therapeutic options, and takes actions when the client is unable to provide informed consent or capable of decision making.
12. Engages the client's or their representative's perspective in all aspects of clinical decision-making, including assessment, diagnosis and prescribing decisions.
13. Maintains professional knowledge and competence in relation to prescribing by engaging in self-reflection to determine continuing competence needs.

Assessment and diagnosis

Conducts a relevant history and assessment of the client

14. Collects information relevant to the client encounter, including client status and health needs.
15. Reviews information relevant to the client encounter, including information from other health care providers.
16. Performs a relevant physical examination based on assessment findings and specific client characteristics.
17. Uses critical inquiry and clinical reasoning in decision-making to synthesize and integrate health information, and to ascertain that sufficient information has been obtained about the client's co-existing conditions, current treatments and health history, to identify possible risks and contradictions.
18. Recognizes when information about the client is unclear or incomplete, or if more information is required to make safe prescribing decisions, and takes the appropriate steps to obtain the relevant information.

19. Uses critical inquiry and diagnostic reasoning to synthesize and integrate health information to establish the probable diagnosis.
20. Uses critical thinking in clinical decision-making by processing and synthesizing health information to determine treatment options (pharmacological and non-pharmacological) in collaboration with the client.
21. Uses critical thinking in clinical decision-making by processing and synthesizing health information to identify pharmacological option(s) within the legal scope of practice.
28. Demonstrates understanding of drug interactions.
29. Demonstrates understanding of the potential safety risks when the RN dispenses or administers a medication that they prescribe, and develops strategies to mitigate such risks.
30. Completes accurate prescription(s) in accordance with legal requirements.
31. Monitors and documents the client's response to drug therapy. Where appropriate, based on the client's response, the RN may decide to continue, adjust, withdraw the drug, or to consult.

Demonstrates effective communication to inform client of diagnosis

22. Discusses assessment findings with the client.
23. Communicates diagnoses to clients when the RN is prescribing the medication to treat the condition being diagnosed.
24. Confirms client understanding of information related to findings and diagnoses.

Pharmacotherapy and other therapeutic interventions in client care

Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of safe prescribing by engaging in evidence-informed best practice in prescribing

25. Completes a review of the best-possible medication history before prescribing.
26. Applies knowledge of pharmacology and evidence informed practice in prescribing medications.
27. Recognizes personal values, beliefs, cultural influences and experience that may affect prescribing decisions.

Provides education to client about medication, which includes:

32. Educates the client on the rationale for medication selected.
33. Educates the client on the expected action of the drug.
34. Educates the client on the side-effects, contraindications, precautions, and potential interactions.
35. Educates the client on the administration instructions and importance of compliance with prescribed frequency, duration of therapy and how to store the drug.
36. Apply strategies to reduce risk of harm involving medication misuse.
37. Establish a follow-up plan where appropriate.



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