

CHAPTER 2. CLINICAL NURSING PRACTICE

2.01 STATEMENT OF POLICY

All registered nurses are responsible and accountable for the nursing care of patients, and for maintaining high standards of nursing practice and professional conduct. Nursing practice contributes to the promotion and maintenance of health, the prevention of disease, rehabilitation to optimal levels of functioning and supportive measures for a dignified death.

2.02 GENERAL PROVISIONS

a. Standards of nursing practice will be implemented and monitored by each Nursing Service.

b. Registered nurses will be responsible for all nursing care. This will include the direct supervision of all categories of nursing personnel and nursing students.

c. Registered nurses will maintain competency in their nursing practice.

d. Patient care assignments will be specific and individualized according to the needs of patients and the qualifications of nursing personnel, and will provide continuity in care.

e. A registered nurse will be assigned to circulate and supervise nursing activities in each operating room during surgical procedures.

f. Registered nurses will exchange essential patient care information at the change of each tour of duty and at other times when appropriate. Relevant information will be shared among nurses, physicians, other direct care providers and the nursing administrative staff to ensure that patient care requirements are met. Registered nurses will be informed of channels of communication and lines of authority within the Nursing Service and the medical center.

g. The nursing staff will participate as members of the interdisciplinary health care team in planning, implementing, and evaluating patient care.

h. The nursing plan for care will maximize each patient's potential for self-care and independence. The patient and family will be included in planning nursing care and in setting goals.

i. Nursing care will be documented according to medical center policies and guidelines.

2.03 PATIENTS' RIGHTS AND PATIENT ADVOCACY

a. Nursing personnel will provide care which is consistent with the patient's right to be treated with dignity in a humane environment that provides reasonable protection from harm and appropriate privacy. Nursing personnel will function in accordance with the VA Code of Patient Concern, the VA's published Patients' Rights, and other relevant policies and guidelines.

b. Prompt evaluation and appropriate intervention will be made in the event of a complaint, from any source, which is related to dissatisfaction with patient care.

c. Issues identified by a designated patient advocate will receive appropriate attention by Nursing Service personnel. Methods will be established to resolve issues related to patient care.

d. Nursing Service personnel will report all incidents of alleged patient abuse, mistreatment, or neglect, by initiating a VA Form 10-2633, Report of Special Incident Involving a Beneficiary, in accordance with locally established reporting mechanisms.

2.04 QUALITY ASSURANCE

a. The Chief, Nursing Service, will be responsible for assuring that the evaluation of nursing practice is effectively accomplished; that nursing personnel are competent to function in their assignments; and, that action is taken to correct deficiencies. Optimal achievable standards of nursing practice will be promoted. Direct providers of nursing care will participate in the program. The Nursing Service quality assurance program will be integrated with the overall quality assurance program at the medical center. Findings which are obtained from the quality assurance review will be used to provide direction for planning appropriate nursing and staff development programs.

b. A CNPC (Clinical Nursing Practice Committee) will be established to improve the nursing care provided to veterans. Recommendations of the CNPC will be submitted to the Chief, Nursing Service, for decision making and action. Objectives of the CNPC will include the following:

(1) Assist in identifying nursing practice issues of concern throughout the medical center.

(2) Elicit input from nursing colleagues in the resolution of practice issues and in dealing with trends in health care and the nursing profession.

(3) Identify new techniques and creative approaches in nursing practice.

(4) Promote the application of relevant research in nursing practice, and

(5) Recommend methods of evaluating innovations in nursing practice.

2.05 LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Nursing Service personnel will be responsible and accountable for providing care which conforms to usual and customary standards, and is within the limits of their own training and experience.

2.06 CLINICAL PRIVILEGES

a. A statement of clinical privileges will be established for registered nurses as necessary. This will be done in collaboration with nurse and physician supervisors before being forwarded to the appropriate local credentialing body for review. Final approval will be designated by the signatures of the Chief, Nursing Service, the supervising physician, Chief of Staff and the medical center Director.

b. Privileges are to be reviewed annually and may be amended, continued or suspended by following established procedures.

c. Routine nursing functions need not be designated in individual clinical privilege statements if they appear in the medical center's functional statements for registered nurses.

d. Nonroutine duties should be specified in clinical privilege statements according to the training and ability of the nurse, and the requirements of the practice setting to which the nurse is currently assigned.