



Position statement

Role of the Unregulated Health Care Worker

The purpose of this position statement is to outline key issues relating to employment of Unregulated Health Care Workers

NEA support care delivery models and appropriate skill mix that ensures that health consumers receive nursing care that is assessed, planned, provided and evaluated by registered nurses in order that safety, effective risk management processes and effective patient outcomes are achieved.

The primary relationship is between the registered nurse/midwife and the health consumer. Nursing care may only be provided by qualified nurses capable of coordinating care to achieve the best outcome of the patient/client. As registered health professionals, nurses can provide this range of care activities and may delegate aspects of the work to health service support workers when this work does not require professional judgement.

The use of unregulated health care workers within the health team ensures the most effective and efficient use of human resources to provide affordable health care. The unregulated health care worker must receive adequate training and this role does not replace the nurse practitioner (NP) registered nurse (RN) / midwife (MW) or enrolled nurse (EN). The unregulated health care worker's role is task-specific and has defined boundaries and their role is 'determined by their employer and outlined in their job description' (NCNZ, 2011).

The term unregulated health care worker is used to describe the variety of health care workers who are not licensed or regulated by any governmental or regulatory body. Within this definition both "health care assistants" (HCAs) and "other" unregulated health care workers (such as, operating department practitioners, and physician's assistants). For the purposes of this document the unregulated health care worker will refer to the role of the HCA. HCAs are employed under a range of titles (including caregivers, health care workers, health assistants, kaimahi hauora, hospital aides, and HCAs), and in a range of settings. Unregulated health care workers "assist registered nurses by completing personal care and other activities that do not require specialist nursing knowledge, judgment and skill (Nursing Council 2008, p. 17).

RNs, registered midwives and nurse practitioners (NPs) may direct and ¹delegate the work of HCAs and ENs may co-ordinate the work of HCAs. The decision to delegate tasks is a professional judgement and should only occur after assessment of the patient/client, taking into account;

- health consumer safety and wellbeing
- the stability of the health status of the health consumer so that no component of care or task may be delegated that requires nursing or judgement and skill to ensure safety
- the nature of the health consumer's illness, treatment regime and their wishes

¹ In some isolated situations delegation may be required from a Medical Officer



- the potential benefits and risks to the patient/client
- the registered nurse/midwife's ability to supervise the work
- the ability of the health service support workers to do the work.

The nursing profession defines and supervises the education, training and utilisation for any unregulated health care worker role involved in providing direct patient care. Educational programmes are not just simplified versions of the professional nursing curriculum, but specific to the learning needs of assistive nursing personnel.

Unregulated health care workers;

- work under the direction and delegation of the qualified nurse
- undertake activities that support the maintenance of the patient / client care environment and is an assistant to the qualified nurse
- do not undertake any nursing activity that requires independent and specialised knowledge, judgement and skill
- understand that no task may be re-delegated by another health service support worker

Nurses should be prepared to undertake the responsibilities of health team supervision and delegation of care so that delegation includes the right task, in the right circumstances to the right person with the right direction and communication followed by the right supervision.

Nurse Leader Considerations

Skill mix should be monitored to ensure adequate direction and delegation.

Key Documents

International Council of Nurses. Assistive or Support Nursing Personnel.

<http://www.icn.ch/psassistive.htm>

Nursing Council of New Zealand Delegation and direction guidelines (2011)

New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO)

NZNO: Unregulated Health Care Workers, 2011.

Source: <https://www.nzno.org.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Vxh1xg0uST8%3d&portalid=0>

NZNO: Unregulated Healthcare Workers Education Framework, 2011

Source: <https://www.nzno.org.nz/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=xsGue668knU%3d&portalid=0>