



POSITION STATEMENT

ADVANCED PRACTICE IN WOUND, OSTOMY, AND CONTINENCE NURSING

INTRODUCTION

The role of the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN), including those of the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and Nurse Practitioner (NP), was established by the American Nurses Association in 1965 (ANA, 1996).

Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing (WOCN) practice is a distinct and well-defined field of nursing practice, which is national in scope and is based on a tested body of specialty-related, data-based knowledge. Consistent with the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) definition of a nursing specialty, there is an identified need for the WOCN specialty and for nurses who devote most of their practice to this area of expertise (ABNS, 2000).

APRNs functioning in the WOCN specialty serve as clinical patient care experts in the care of patients with disorders of the integumentary, gastrointestinal and/or urinary systems. Roles include those of direct care provider, consultant, mentor, educator, researcher and/or administrator. Working with various members of the health care team to coordinate patient-focused care, APRNs develop evidence-based programs, protocols and tools to facilitate provision of optimal health care.

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board defines an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) in the WOCN specialty as one who minimally:

- Has completed Graduate preparation (Master's or Doctoral degree in a related specialty area of nursing).
- Is clinically active in the WOCN specialty.
- Demonstrates advanced knowledge of the WOCN specialty via a valid and reliable measurement of competency (e.g. a psychometrically sound examination or professional portfolio).

CORE COMPETENCIES

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB) is a professional organization dedicated to providing consumer safety and protection by offering credentialing in the areas of wound, ostomy and continence care nursing.

- The WOCNCB acknowledges the *Essentials of Graduate Education* documented by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 1996) which includes theoretical foundations, inquiry skills, empirical and practical knowledge that focus on phenomena of concern (e.g. wounds, ostomies, or continence), nursing therapeutics, evaluation methodologies and systems thinking (AACN, 1996).
- The *APRN Uniform Requirements* adopted by the Delegate Assembly of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing note that, through graduate level education, a nurse can further develop abstract and critical thinking, the ability to assess at an advanced level, as well as other essential therapeutic skills. The WOCNCB supports this perspective, noting that the APRN educational preparation should encompass both knowledge and the clinical component unique to the specific role (NCSBN, 2002).

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- The WOCNCB further recognizes the essential characteristics outlined by the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists *Statement on CNS Practice and Education* as integral for the effective practice of all APRNs. Skill sets identified include professional attributes (e.g. self-knowledge, self-confidence, self-scrutiny and personal mastery), leadership skills (e.g. communication/interpersonal skills, disciplined inquiry, systems thinking and ethical reasoning); collaboration skills; and consultation skills. Spheres of influence encompass patients/clients, nursing personnel, and organizations/networks (NACNS, 1998).
- Consistent with the discussion of professional accountability as outlined in the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners statement on Scope of Practice, the WOCNCB believes that the autonomous nature of all APRN practice requires accountability for health care outcomes. The commitment to optimal quality health care requires certification, peer review, and evidence of continuing professional development (AANP, 2002).
- THE WOCNCB recognizes that measurement of APRN competency in the WOCN specialty requires both measurement of core APRN competencies along with those of the WOCN specialty. Further, it must be noted that the measurement of competency in a generalist scope of knowledge (e.g. via a Medical –Surgical CNS or Adult NP examination) does not assure advanced nursing competency in the WOCN specialty.

WOCNCB POSITION ON WOCN ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE

- The WOCNCB supports and promotes WOCN practice as a defined specialty area of advanced practice nursing.
- The WOCNCB believes specialty nursing certification boards have the right and responsibility to define advanced nursing specialty practice and to institute certifying procedures for the measurement of advanced specialty competency.
- WOCNCB recognizes and supports the State Boards of Nursing as the governing bodies for nursing licensure and regulation.
- WOCNCB supports efforts to standardize APRN licensure requirements nationally, with recognition of input from all stakeholders.
- WOCNCB supports legislative efforts to promote reimbursement for APRN services, along with autonomy and the option for prescriptive authority for all APRNs.

REFERENCES

- American Nurses Association. (1996). *Scope and Standards of Advanced Practice Registered Nursing*. Washington, DC.
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