



**TO:** The Professional Practice Committee

**FROM:** Douglas E. Lentivech

**SUBJECT:** A Discussion of Program Requirements in Nursing Education Including an Assessment of Medication Administration and Substance-Abuse Prevention Coursework

**DATE:** December 3, 2012

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**   
SUMMARY

**Issue for Discussion**

This item will present an update on the programmatic requirements in Nursing Education with an emphasis on the coursework relating to administering medication and substance-abuse prevention.

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

For Information.

**Proposed Handling**

This item is submitted for information and discussion at the December 2012 meeting of the Professional Practice Committee.

**Procedural History**

The Office of the Professions routinely briefs the Professional Practice Committee with respect to educational issues as they relate to certain professions.

**Background Information**

The Professional Education Program Review unit, in consultation with the State Board for Nursing, approves and monitors nursing education programs registered with the New York State Education Department as preparation for practice as a registered

professional nurse (RN), licensed practical nurse (LPN) or nurse practitioner in New York State. These education programs must not only meet standards in Part 52 of the Commissioner's Regulations relating to registration, but must also include the clinical content, knowledge, and skill courses that equip the practitioner for a lifetime of safe and competent patient care. The specific requirements for each of the nursing license areas vary according to the license; however, all generally include coursework in microbiology, physiology, anatomy, medication administration and other subject areas tied to providing nursing care.

One curricular area that has grown in importance and coverage is substance-abuse prevention among nurses, especially as it relates to nurses' medication administration duties and their access to potentially addictive narcotic substances. While not a recent phenomenon, substance abuse among nurses now elicits a more proactive response and approach, which requires more preemptive measures such as incorporating the topics into LPN and RN nursing education curricula. And, while there is technically no specific education regulation which mentions substance abuse or medication administration, these topics are required components for nursing education program registration. The Department's nurse education review staff require that schools cite which courses include this very important subject, and often find it in various medication administration, pharmacology, and psychiatric/mental health nursing courses.

Current nursing curricula often employ a more holistic approach to the issue and include both technical and socio-behavioral aspects of medical drugs, narcotics and substance abuse within the profession. Medication administration is often embedded in both the didactic and clinical practice courses, and is spiraled throughout the curriculum to ensure that students have met all of the progression criteria and are prepared to properly and accurately dispense medication types and dosages. This area of education goes beyond the physical act of dispensing medications, and students are expected to know drug actions, routes of administration, side effects, therapeutic doses, and drug interactions. The level of sophistication with respect to knowledge of pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics varies between RN and LPN programs, and is more advanced at the RN level. In addition, all nursing programs require students to be competent in mathematics for medication administration.

Nursing programs must also make students aware of the coping mechanisms and resources available to address the unique pressures and challenges associated with the clinical therapy environment which includes sickness, death, trauma, and many other stress-inducing factors and situations. While studies indicate that substance abuse among nurses is on par with the rate among the general public, there is evidence that the demands of the profession and the proximity to habit-forming drugs -- particularly prescription painkillers -- is a problematic combination. The issue can lead to dangerous patient care scenarios and license suspensions or revocations, and can ultimately compromise health care settings and systems. For these reasons, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department need to continually consider and explore the proactive measures at our disposal, such as nursing education and skills development, to prepare for and combat substance abuse within the clinical nursing professions and settings.

At the December meeting of the Professional Practice Committee, the Executive Secretary for Nursing and the Director of Professional Education will provide an update and discuss some of the education requirements and trends related to medication administration and substance-abuse prevention in nursing. In addition, they will be available to answer questions from the Committee.