

# Drug Therapy Protocol for Nurse Practitioners

## 1. Purpose

This drug therapy protocol states the circumstances in which, and the conditions under which, a nurse practitioner may prescribe, give a written or oral instruction, supply and administer a stated controlled or restricted drug or poison.

## 2. Scope

This protocol applies to all registered nurses who:

- hold a current endorsement as a nurse practitioner under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*; and
- are engaged in practice as a nurse practitioner in Queensland.

## 3. Authorising legislation

*Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996* (Sections 67(4), 175(5) & 263(5)).

## 4. Circumstances

A nurse practitioner may prescribe, give a written or oral instruction, supply and administer the controlled and restricted drugs or poisons that are necessary to practise nursing within the approved practice scope of the position in which the nurse practitioner is engaged.

For the purpose of this drug therapy protocol, *practice scope* includes the scope of clinical practice of the position, and service capability of the health service setting, in which the nurse practitioner is engaged.

## 5. Conditions

### 5.1 Practice scope must be defined

A nurse practitioner is not permitted to act under this drug therapy protocol unless the practice scope has been defined in writing and approved by one of the following (*'the approving entity'*):

- (a) The Chief Executive of the Health Service District or State-wide Health Service, under the *Health Services Act 1991*, in which the nurse practitioner is engaged.
- (b) The Chief Executive of a private health facility licensed under the *Private Health Facilities Act 1999*, in which the nurse practitioner is engaged
- (c) Where a nurse practitioner is otherwise employed under a contract of employment or a contract for services - a health practitioner who is the employer, or a delegate of the employer, and holds current registration under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* with no conditions or undertakings.
- (d) In all other cases, an interdisciplinary team comprising, as a minimum, a registered nurse, a medical practitioner and a pharmacist, who each hold current registration under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* with no conditions or undertakings.

### 5.2 Review

The approval of a practice scope shall be for a maximum period of three years.

The practice scope must be reviewed and re-approved by the approving entity at least every three years, and in any case when new clinical services, procedures or other interventions are being introduced into the nurse practitioner position.

### 5.3 Approved practice scope to be published

A copy of the approved practice scope must be given to the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer, Queensland Health, within 10 working days of the first approval and each re-approval.

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A nurse practitioner is not permitted to act under this drug therapy protocol until the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer acknowledges receipt of the relevant approved practice scope.

The Office of the Chief Nursing Officer is required to publish the approved practice scope for each nurse practitioner position on Queensland Health's website.

A nurse practitioner must provide a copy of the approved practice scope for the position in which the nurse practitioner is engaged to any person immediately upon request.

## 5.4 Quality use of medicines

A nurse practitioner acting under this drug therapy protocol must:

- (a) comply with the *National Policy on the Quality Use of Medicines*; and
- (b) be able to demonstrate their use of controlled and restricted drugs or poisons is evidence based and in accordance with the recognised clinical standards, practices and procedures for health care in Australia.

## 5.5 Exclusions

A nurse practitioner acting under this drug therapy protocol must not prescribe, give a written or oral instruction, supply or administer medicines that have not been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

## 5.6 'Off-label' use

A nurse practitioner acting under this drug therapy protocol must not prescribe, give a written or oral instruction, supply or administer a controlled or restricted drug or poison outside the terms of the manufacturer's product information ('off-label') unless the nurse practitioner is satisfied there is a sufficient evidence base to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of using the drug or poison.

## 5.7 Documents to be kept

A nurse practitioner acting under this drug therapy protocol is required to keep the following documents:

- (a) A copy of the approved practice scope for the position in which the nurse practitioner is engaged.
- (b) Evidence that the nurse practitioner's clinical practice and use of medicines is audited at least annually by an interdisciplinary team with expertise in the nurse practitioner's practice scope.

These documents are required to be kept for the purpose of the *Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996* and may be required to be produced to an inspector under section 153N of the *Health Act 1937*.

## 6. Suspension or cancellation

A nurse practitioner's authority to act under this drug therapy protocol may be suspended or cancelled pursuant to Chapter 1, Part 5, Division 4 of the *Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996*.

## 7. Certification

Certified at Brisbane this 29 day of July 2010 to take effect from 31 January 2011.

**Michael Reid**  
Director-General