

Practice Education Guidelines for BC Student Scope of Practice

GL#4-3

Practice Guideline

July 15, 2008

Students may perform only those activities for which they have received instruction within the education program and only if permitted by Receiving Agency policy.

Guideline Details

Students may perform activities only if:

- the performing of the activity in that practice setting is permitted by Receiving Agency policy and practice standards
- the activity is within the scope of practice of the profession
- the supervisor's profession or position is authorized to perform the activity
- the staff/physician/faculty supervising the student in the performance of the activity is competent and qualified to perform the activity
- the student's performance of the activity is under the direct supervision* of qualified* staff/physician/faculty until judged to be able to safely and effectively perform the activity with a consistent level of competence
- the supervision of the student's performance of the activity continues at a level appropriate to the risk of harm thereafter.

The student may not perform the activity if:

- the performing of the activity in that practice setting is not permitted by Receiving Agency policy and practice standards **or**
- the student has not had the theory or practice in a lab setting and the supervisor is not available to teach or directly supervise the activity **or**
- the student's supervisor is not qualified*/permitted to perform the activity **or**
- the student's supervisor does not feel comfortable with the student performing the activity **or**
- the student's supervisor judges the student is not ready to perform the activity.

NOTE: Some activities must be performed under direct and continuous supervision* each and every time as determined by either the Placing or Receiving Agencies policies.

In cases where there is a discrepancy between Placing Agency policy and Receiving Agency policy, the more restrictive of the two policies apply.

In the absence of on site faculty, the final responsibility for the decision as to whether or not the student performs an activity lies with the Receiving Agency staff within policy guidelines.

Roles & Responsibilities

Students:

- Ensure that their actions are limited to their scope of practice as defined by the Placing Agency, the professional body (if applicable), and by Receiving Agency policies and practice guidelines.

Students and on site faculty:

* indicates term is defined under 'Definitions' section

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Placing Agencies:

- Develop policy describing what students can and cannot do according to the level of student.
- Inform the students of the practice policies related to performing activities in the practice education setting. In order to ensure that students are adequately supervised, Placing Agencies should outline expectations for supervision at the outset of the practice education experience.
- Provide the practice education setting a description of competencies including a list of skills that the student(s) have been taught to date and can perform.
- Overall teaching and supervision of students, unless special arrangements have been made with the Receiving Agency prior to the commencement of the learning experience.

Receiving Agency staff:

- Ultimately responsible for care of the patient and/or service in the practice setting.
- Be familiar with their own scope of practice as well as that of students under their supervision
- Inform their colleagues in the practice setting of the scope of practice of any students under their supervision.

Receiving Agencies:

- Identify in their organizational policies which activities students are not permitted to perform.

Consequences of Non-compliance

Anyone who performs an activity outside of their scope of practice places the patient, the Receiving Agency, the Placing Agency, and themselves at risk.

In keeping with Receiving Agency responsibility for care, education and research, Receiving Agencies have the right to intervene in any instance where a student may be functioning in a manner considered to be potentially dangerous or harmful to the well-being of the patient or Agency, or contrary to the Agency mission, vision, values, policies, procedures, rules, or regulations. This could result in the termination of the clinical placement, termination of the educational agreement, and/or legal action. The Agency is not responsible for the consequences resulting from the termination.

Rationale

Protection of the patient is of primary concern. Students are in the Receiving Agency under a mutual contract between the Receiving Agency and the Placing Agency. Unsafe practice may

result in harm to the patient and all parties within the Affiliation Agreement being liable for damages.

Receiving Agencies define where and when staff are permitted to perform an activity. These policies are based on accreditation standards, professional practice standards, provincial/federal law, and organizational resources. Some activities may only be performed by qualified professionals. Other activities may only be performed once the individual has received additional education and/or certification.

Usually, students have practiced most activities in the lab setting or under direct faculty supervision prior to staff supervision or performing independently. Students progress to perform most activities within the job description of the supervising staff by the end of their program as long as they have received the required level of instruction and opportunities to apply theory to practice.

Definitions

Direct Supervision: Where a supervising staff/physician/faculty is present to observe and correct, as needed, the performance of the student. Direct supervision requires that the supervisor be in the room. The goal of direct supervision is to provide reasonable assurance that concerns related to the performance of activities are identified and corrected before patients are harmed.¹

Qualified: A person who has “the competence to carry out the activity safely and ethically and to manage the intended and unintended outcomes of the activity”.² This may include the successful completion of an education program or certification.

References

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¹ Adapted from College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. (February 2006). B. Standards for Professional Practice: Clinical Education. Toronto, ON.

² College of Registered Nurses of BC. (April 2006). Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses; Standards, Limits, and Conditions. Pub. #433. Vancouver, BC. Pg. 14.

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