

# Responsibilities of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses in the Field of Patient Care

Park Ethan\*

Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Michigan, **Michigan**, United states

\***Corresponding author:** Park Ethan, Department of Emergency Medicine University of Michigan, **Michigan**, United states, Tel: +15259632554; E-mail: parkethan@gmail.com

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## Introduction

Patient care is not just about the medical aspect of nursing. Patients may experience stress about their conditions, injuries, procedures, surgeries, or recovery. It is important for nurses to treat a patient's physical ailments as well as his or her emotional needs.

When nurses show empathy, they foster a collaborative relationship with patients, which can help in rooting out causes, symptoms or explanations that result in a proper diagnosis and appropriate treatments. Open communication and mutual respect between nurses and their patients can result in these positive patient outcomes.

Nurses develop a plan of care, working collaboratively with physicians, therapists, the patient, the patient's family, and other team members that focus on treating illness to improve quality of life. In the United Kingdom and the United States, advanced practice nurses, such as clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners, diagnose health problems and prescribe medications and other therapies, depending on individual state regulations. Nurses may help coordinate the patient care performed by other members of a multidisciplinary health care team such as therapists, medical practitioners, and dietitians. Nurses provide care both interdependently, for example, with physicians, and independently as nursing professionals. Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) hold at least a Master's degree, in addition to the initial nursing education and licensing required for all RNs. The responsibilities of an APRN include, but are not limited to, providing invaluable primary and preventative health care to the public. APRNs treat and diagnose illnesses, advise the public on health issues, manage chronic disease and engage in continuous education to remain at the very forefront of any technological, methodological, or other developments in the field. Medication management and administration are part of most hospital nursing roles; however, prescribing authority varies between jurisdictions. In many areas, registered nurses administer and manage medications prescribed by a professional with full prescribing authority such as a nurse practitioner or physician. As nurses are responsible for evaluating patients throughout their care including before and after medication administration adjustments to medications are often made through a collaborative effort between the prescriber and the nurse. Regardless of the prescriber, nurses

are legally responsible for the drugs they administer. There may be legal implications when there is an error in a prescription, and the nurse could be expected to have noted and reported the error. In the United States, nurses have the right to refuse any medication administration that they deem to be potentially harmful to the patient. In the United Kingdom there are some nurses who have taken additional specialist training that allows them to prescribe any medications from their scope of practice. Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), also known as Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs), support the core health care team and work under the supervision of an RN, APRN or MD. By providing basic and routine care, they ensure the wellbeing of patients throughout the whole of the health care journey. Protecting and advancing scope of practice for nurses is a major initiative for ANA. In the fast-moving world of health care, it is vital that nurses are able to practice to the full extent of their education and abilities, in order to deliver the most efficient, quality care to patients.

There is a growing body of evidence to support the safe and cost-effective provision of care by APRNs, and a national call to remove all barriers to full practice authority. ANA remains committed to monitoring and advocating for legislative and regulatory changes relating to scope of practice, with the aim of removing practice barriers for nurses and improving access to care. Our health care system faces immense challenges. Staff shortages brought about by cost-cutting decisions, an aging population, increased patient complexity and need, and an aging workforce places stress on working conditions for nurses and affects patient care and overall outcomes. An increasing body of evidence shows appropriate nurse staffing contributes to improved patient outcomes and greater satisfaction for both patients and staff. However, the need remains for appropriate staffing in all health care settings. For more than two decades, ANA has continued working to address unsafe nurse staffing levels to improve working conditions for nurses and achieve optimal patient outcomes. Safe nurse staffing is essential to both the nursing profession and to the overall health care system. Staffing affects the ability of all nurses to deliver safe, quality care in all practice settings. By eliminating unsafe nurse staffing practices and policies, we can provide better health care for all. The primary role of a nurse is to advocate and care for individuals and support them through health and illness.