

**The Role of the
Nurse Practitioner
in Geriatric Care**

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What is a Nurse Practitioner?

Degree-prepared nurse
Registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario in the Extended Class - RN(EC)
Additional nursing education
Provide individuals, families, groups and communities with health services in:

Health promotion
Disease and injury prevention
Cure
Rehabilitation
Support

Advanced practice nurse, functioning within the full scope of nursing practice and is **NOT** a physician substitute.

How is a Nurse Practitioner different from a registered nurse?

Able to autonomously perform controlled acts (Bill 127)
Diagnose common diseases or disorders
Order specific diagnostic tests (e.g. ultrasound, x-rays, blood tests)
Prescribe a limited range of medications

Historical Perspective

1965

First NP program at U. of Colorado

1967

First education program for NPs working in northern nursing stations started at Dalhousie Univ. (N.S.)

1971

First university program in Ontario to prepare NPs

1980's

First NP initiative ends (perceived physician oversupply, lack of remuneration mechanisms, lack of legislation, lack of public awareness, lack of support from medicine and nursing).

Last NP program closes in Ontario

1993

Ont. MoH announces new NP initiative as part of improving access to primary health care

1995

Primary Health Care NP program starts

1996

First graduates of the PHC NP program

1998

Bill 127, the *Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act* is proclaimed

College of Nurses of Ontario initiates the Extended Class registration process

1999

Ont. MoH announces reinvestment of \$375 million in nursing

106 NP positions in CHC

80+ positions in Underserved Areas

20 positions in Long-Term Care

Role within Long-Term Care

Ont. MoH funded 20 nurse practitioners to work in Nursing Homes, Day Hospitals settings, and CCACs serving primarily the geriatric population

2 year pilot project evaluating the effectiveness of the role

Role Components

Practitioner

Consultant

Educator

Leader

Advocate

Practitioner

Performs admission/annual physical exams

Diagnoses and manages acute, episodic health conditions, such as urinary tract infections, respiratory infections, benign skin rashes/lacerations, leg ulcers, osteoarthritis, etc..

Manages stable, chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, COPD, CHF

If a condition is outside of the scope of practice, NP consults with physician colleague

Advantages

Earlier access to assessment and treatment

Prevention of secondary sequelae, e.g. worsening of health, transfer to hospital

Enables physician colleagues to focus on more complex medical issues

Focus on patient education/prevention

Consultant

Shares specialized nursing knowledge through consultation at a community, organizational or resident-specific level

Examples

Member of professional organizations and committees assisting in the improvement of care of the elderly (e.g. pain management)

Implementing nurse/physician team rounds in a facility where this doesn't exist

Provide recommendations to physicians and nurses in management of challenging behaviours

Educator

Teach geriatric physical assessment course at Fanshawe for RNs/RPNs

Provides formal and informal (Ajust-in time@) teaching to staff regarding clinical issues (e.g. assessment skills, drug side-effects, new, evidence-based approaches to care)

Teach patient/families about their health issues, prevention strategies

Leader

Contributes to Mission, Philosophy, Values, Standards, Goals and Objectives of the LTC facility and

Nursing

Promotes the advancement of nursing and primary health care by acting as an innovator, advocate, change agent and role model

Examples

Involved in nursing research, including publication

Educating the public on the value of the NP role in geriatrics

Advocate

Promotes and endorses improvement in care available to LTC residents and their care givers

Examples

Involved in professional organization dedicated in improving care of the elderly (eg. Gerontological Nursing Association, Long-Term Care Innovation and Leadership Institute)

Member of Professional Advisory Committee/Medical Advisory Committee at each facility enable issues to be brought to key decision makers

Other NP Roles in Geriatric Care

Hospital Setting

Geriatric Assessment/Rehab Units
In-Hospital Consultation Services

Clinic Setting

Specialty - Aging Brain Clinic
 - Continence Clinic
General

Community Setting

Outreach Assessment Programs
NP-run Clinics