

Definitions and qualifications for registration as a nurse

Background:

Practices claiming practice nurse item numbers by persons who are not nurses

It has come to the attention of the Nursing in General Practice (NiGP) staff at General Practice NSW (GP NSW) that there are some practices within NSW who are claiming MBS item numbers which are nurse specific (e.g. items 10993, 10997 etc), for staff who are not nurses (overseas trained doctors who are not registered in Australia).

For the purpose of the MBS item numbers, *'a practice nurse means a registered nurse or an enrolled nurse who is employed by, or whose services are otherwise retained by, a general practice. The practice nurse must be appropriately qualified and trained'* (MBS online). Therefore, general practices employing assistants in nursing (AIN) are not able to claim the practice nurse (PN) specific MBS item numbers.

In Australia, nurses are licensed to practise by nurse regulatory authorities established under State or Territory legislation. Australia has two levels of licensed nurse - registered nurses and enrolled nurses. Additionally, assistants in nursing and other unlicensed health care assistants support nursing work. Since 1993, all registered nurses complete a Bachelor degree in the higher education (university) sector.

Definition and qualifications for registration as a nurse

'Registered Nurse' (RN) means a person registered by the NSW Nurse and Midwives Board as a Registered Nurse and/or Registered Midwife. The entry requirement for a registered nurse is a bachelor degree or higher qualification. Registration or licensing is required. Any person who satisfies the NSW Nurses and Midwives Board that he or she is of good character is, on making an application in writing to the Board for the purpose and on paying to the Board the prescribed fee, entitled to be registered as a nurse and to be issued with a certificate of that registration if:

- a) the person satisfies the Board that he or she has completed a course of training as a nurse at an institution in Australia, being a course of training that is recognised by the Board as entitling the person to registration as a nurse, and is the holder of a degree, diploma, certificate or other qualification to the effect that the person has successfully completed that course; or
- b) the person satisfies the Board that he or she would, but for the commencement of Schedule 2 (3) to the Nurses Registration (Amendment) Act 1985, have been entitled to be registered under the Nurses Registration Act 1953 as a general nurse, a mental retardation nurse or a psychiatric nurse; or
- c) the person satisfies the Board that he or she:
 - has undergone a course of training as a nurse in any place outside Australia in which a law providing for the registration of nurses is in force, and
 - is the holder of a degree, diploma, certificate or other qualification to the effect that the person has successfully completed the course of training, and
 - is registered as a nurse under that law, and the Board is of the opinion that the standards of that training and of the examinations leading to that degree,

- diploma, certificate or other qualification are not lower than the standards provided for by or under this Act for the registration of nurses; or
- d) the person satisfies the Board that he or she:
- has undergone a course of training as a nurse, and
 - is the holder of a degree, diploma, certificate or other qualification approved by the Board from an institution, person or body in any place (in or outside Australia) to the effect that the person has successfully completed the course of training, and
 - the person has passed such examinations, and has successfully completed such additional training, as the Board may in the particular case require, and the Board is satisfied that the qualifications of the person are adequate for the purposes of registration as a nurse; or
- e) the person was previously registered as a nurse under this Act or the Nurses Registration Act 1953, being registration properly granted on the basis of qualifications actually possessed by the person at the time of that previous registration.

<http://www.nmb.nsw.gov.au/>

Definition of a Nurse Practitioner (ANMC 2006)

'A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse educated and authorised to function autonomously and collaboratively in an advanced and extended clinical role. The nurse practitioner role includes assessment and management of clients using nursing knowledge and skills and may include, but is not limited to, the direct referral of patients to other health care professionals, prescribing medications and ordering diagnostic investigations.

The nurse practitioner role is grounded in the nursing profession's values, knowledge, theories and practise and provides innovative and flexible health care delivery that complements other health care providers. The scope of practice of the nurse practitioner is determined by the context in which the nurse practitioner is authorised to practise'.
(Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council).

<http://www.nmb.nsw.gov.au/>, <http://www.anmc.org.au>

Definition of Enrolled Nurse

The enrolled nurse is the second level nurse who provides nursing care, working under the direction and supervision of the registered nurse. The supervision may be direct or indirect according to the nature of the work delegated to the enrolled nurse.

It is expected that, on initial enrolment, the enrolled nurse may, with the supervision of a registered nurse, provide patient care in all relatively stable nursing situations and assist the registered nurse with patient care in less stable nursing situations.

The enrolled nurse scope of practice, as described by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, is: *'an associate to the registered nurse who demonstrates competence in the provision of patient-centred care as specified by the registering authority's license to practise, educational preparation and context of care. Core....*

enrolled nursing practice requires the enrolled nurse to work under the direction and supervision of the registered nurse as stipulated by the relevant nurse registering authority. At all times, the enrolled nurse retains responsibility for his/her actions and remains accountable in providing delegated nursing care.'

All enrolled nurses have a responsibility for ongoing self-development to maintain their knowledge base to carry out their role.

In non-hospital settings, any enrolled nurse, who has been assessed as competent by the supervising registered nurse, **may only administer medications that have been dispensed and labelled by a pharmacist** for an individual. In regard to administration of medications listed in Schedule 8 of the Poisons List, the Regulation defines a nurse as a registered nurse and therefore does not permit enrolled nurses to administer Schedule 8 medications in hospital settings. In administering medications, enrolled nurses must comply with the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act.

<http://www.nmb.nsw.gov.au/Education-of-Enrolled-Nurses/default.aspx>

Enrolled Nurse– Medication Endorsement

Medication endorsement for an EN means a person enrolled by the NSW Nurses and Midwives Board and endorsed to administer medications by the Board.

<http://www.nmb.nsw.gov.au/Guideline-for-Development-of-Post-Enrolment-Medication-Courses/default.aspx>

Assistants in Nursing (AINs)

Assistants in nursing assist registered and enrolled nurses in the provision of nursing care. All persons who provide or assist in the provision of nursing care to any individual or group are performing nursing work.

Together, RNs, ENs and AINs comprise the nursing care team, with registered nurses planning and evaluating the nursing care provided. Continuing assessment of nursing care needs and delegation of nursing activities to assistants in nursing is undertaken by registered nurses.

In order to ensure safe care and safe practice, all persons performing nursing work must be appropriately qualified and assessed as competent to practise according to recognised standards.

Assistants in nursing may be employed with or without a qualification. The appropriate qualification for Assistants in Nursing is at Certificate III level of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) using the national competency standards from the Community Services or Health Training Packages depending on the sector.

AINs assist in the provision of basic nursing care, working within a plan of care under the supervision and direction of a registered nurse. Supervision may be direct or indirect.

The role of the AIN is limited to activities appropriate to their level of knowledge and skill, and is commensurate with their education and experience. The role also encompasses providing assistance with the care, comfort and support of individuals and groups in the

activities of daily living, in meeting essential human needs, and in observing and reporting changes in individual or group behaviours.

The registered nurse is responsible for delegating appropriately to the assistant in nursing within the limits of the AINs knowledge, skill, education and experience. Delegation of care is based on the characteristics of the person requiring care and on the complexity of the care required.

At all times, the AIN retains responsibility for their own actions and remains accountable to the registered nurse for all delegated functions.

Activities appropriate to the AIN are determined in consultation with the relevant senior nurse having regard to:

- the educational preparation and clinical competence assistant in nursing,
- the acuity of the person requiring nursing care,
- the level of technical skill required, and
- the registered nurse direction available.

The educational preparation of assistants in nursing should be competency based, consist of theoretical and clinical components, and enable the assistant in nursing to work safely under the supervision and direction of the registered nurse.

The competency standards and education of assistants in nursing should recognise prior learning and relate to enrolled nurse entry level competencies and education in such a way as to ensure articulation between the two.

Clinical placement of assistants in nursing during their period of training must be in appropriate health care settings which are commensurate with the level of skill of a person who is in training to be an assistant in nursing. Assistants in nursing will be supervised by a registered nurse during their period of clinical training.

Assistants in nursing should have access to Health and Community Services, Certificate III programs, continuing education programs, and study leave provisions.

<http://www.nswnurses.asn.au/multiattachments/15279/DocumentName/AINS.pdf>

Unregistered and un-enrolled persons not to hold themselves out as registered or enrolled

A person must not:

- a) claim to be or hold himself or herself out as being, or
- b) take or use any name, initials, word, title, addition, symbol or description which, having regard to the circumstances in which it is taken or used:
 - indicates, or
 - is capable of being understood to indicate, or
 - is likely to lead persons to infer,
 - that the person is, a registered nurse, registered midwife, enrolled nurse or enrolled nurse (mothercraft) or entitled to practise as such unless the person is registered as a nurse or as a midwife (as appropriate) or, as the case requires, is enrolled as an enrolled nurse or enrolled nurse (mothercraft). Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both.

A person (other than a nurse or midwife or a person authorised by the Board) must not wear a badge which is of a design prescribed by the regulations and which is issued to nurses or midwives by the Board, or a similar badge.

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/fullhtml/inforce/act+9+1991+FIRST+0+N#pt.1-sec.3>

Please note the information above is only excerpts from relevant nursing websites and the information should be read in its full context by accessing those websites.

For further information please contact Liz Meadley on lizmeadley@gpnsw.com.au or 0408 606 714.

Relevant websites:

- MBS online:
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Medicare-Benefits-Schedule-MBS-1>
- Nurses and Midwives Board, New South Wales:
<http://www.nmb.nsw.gov.au>
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council:
<http://anmc.org.au>