



# National Standards for Nurse Pap Test Providers



As identified in  
Making Quality Visible - National Standards for Nurse Pap Test Providers

National Cervical Screening Program 1997, National Cancer Prevention & Control Unit, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, Canberra

## ***Competency based standards***

Professional practice  
Reflective practice  
Enabling  
Problem framing and solving  
Teamwork

### **Professional practice.**

Knowledge of legislative principles and an ethical framework are fundamental to professional practice. The competencies in this domain relate to the legal and ethical responsibilities for the nurse Pap test providers and include being accountable for practice and the ability to interpret complex consultations in a legal and ethical sense. Such competencies also include an awareness and protection of the rights of individuals and groups and recognition of the differences between one's own beliefs and those of others, to ensure that nursing care is carried out in a non-discriminatory way (ANCI, 1993; CACCN, 1996).

### **Competency 1 – Demonstrates accurate knowledge for safe practice.**

#### **1.1 Demonstrates an accurate and comprehensive knowledge base of the cervical screening, thereby ensuring safe practice.**

##### ***Examples from practice***

- Demonstrates an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the aetiology of cervical cancer and its prevention.
- Effectively utilises theoretical knowledge in clinical practice.
- Demonstrates accurate and comprehensive knowledge of normal female anatomy and reproductive physiology.
- Recognises the difference between screening services and diagnostic services and practices accordingly, i.e.
  - Ensures women understand the limitations as well as the benefits of cervical screening.
  - Refers symptomatic women, even in the presence of a normal Pap test result.
  - Adheres to national policy and guidelines for cervical screening and the management of women with screen detected abnormalities.

#### **1.2 Demonstrates an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the legislation pertinent to the provision of a cervical screening service.**

### ***Examples from practice.***

- Identifies and understands the legal implications of legislation in relation to nursing practice, e.g. confidentiality.
- Conforms to legislative requirements according to the practice setting, e.g. State of Territory cervical cytology registers.

### **1.3 Demonstrates accurate and comprehensive knowledge of policies, protocols and other relevant documentation for nursing practice and participates in review processes.**

### ***Examples from practice.***

- Participates in the development and review of policies and procedural guidelines to ensure they comply with current national and State/Territory cervical screening policies.
- Utilises policies and procedural guidelines of the health care setting to guide rather than direct practice.

## **Competency 2 – Protects the rights of individuals.**

### **2.1 Consistently and effectively ensures the confidentiality of individual women.**

### ***Examples from practice.***

- Consistently demonstrates confidentiality when dealing with patient information e.g. in discussions with individual women; in sharing information with others.
- Maintains the confidentiality and security of histories/records and reports, i.e. within the health care setting and/or when providing outreach services.

### **2.2 Consistently and effectively ensuring the right of women to make informed decisions regarding their care.**

### ***Examples from practice.***

- Ensures women are informed and understand the benefits and limitations of cervical screening, including new technologies.
- Recognises the rights of women to full and comprehensive information regarding their care.
- Respects the rights of women to be accompanied by a support person of her choice.

## **Reflective practice.**

The competencies in the domain include the development of reflective practices by nurses, appraisal of self and others, a commitment to professional development, and the application of research to practice (ANCI, 1993; CACCN, 1996).

## **Competency 3 – Recognises own ability and level of professional competence.**

### **3.1 Assesses own abilities independently, comprehensively and practices within these limits and scopes of practice.**

### ***Examples from practice.***

- Functions independently and interpedently with others using advanced practice knowledge and skills.
- Recognises the boundaries of own nursing practice and refers women accordingly.
- Regularly reflects on own standard of practice and sets appropriate performance objectives.

### **3.2 Engages in activities to enhance own level of practice.**

#### ***Examples from practice.***

- Seeks to maintain currency of practice regarding the provision of a cervical screening service, e.g. participates in professional development activities, and seeks peer review.
- Critically evaluates research findings utilising those which have relevance to own practice setting.
- Ensures the integration of new knowledge regarding cervical screening and management of women with screen detected abnormalities into own practice.
- Actively participates in quality assurance/improvement activities and uses feedback to improve clinical performance, e.g. cytology laboratory Pap test statistics.

### **3.3 Consistently and effectively integrates cervical screening provision with the broader context of issues affecting women's health.**

#### ***Examples from practice.***

- Demonstrates accurate and comprehensive knowledge of issues affecting women's health, referring appropriately when outside own level of expertise, e.g.
  - Women's reproductive physiology
  - Breast screening
  - Sexually transmitted infections
  - Sexuality
  - Sexual or emotional abuse
  - Family concerns
  - Social issues, etc.
- Demonstrates ability to listen to and respond effectively to issues and concerns effecting individual women.

### **Enabling.**

The competencies in this domain relate to practices essential for establishing and sustaining a nurse/client relationship which is optimal for the well-being of the client. This is based on a holistic approach to client care. Competencies include an ability to address the physical, psycho-social, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs of individual women (ANCI, 1993; CACCN 1996)

## **Competency 4 – Acts to enhance the dignity and integrity of women.**

### **4.1 Employs effective communication and interpersonal skills to meet the needs of individual women.**

#### ***Examples from practice.***

- Actively listen to needs and concerns of individual women and responds appropriately.
- Provides the opportunity for women to express their opinions and be involved in all aspects of their care.
- Facilitate individual women's understanding of her conditions/issues, e.g. uses appropriate language, provides written material.
- Provides the opportunity for women to withdraw from the procedure without her care being compromised.

### **4.2 Respects the values, cultural and spiritual beliefs of individual women.**

#### ***Examples from practice.***

- Demonstrates knowledge and respect of others' beliefs and social contexts.
- Delivers nursing care for the individual woman without prejudice or judgement e.g. speaks in non-judgemental terms; respects of the right of others to their culture, religion or values; responds appropriately to women with a physical or intellectual disability.
- Endeavours to provide a female trained interpreter, either in person or by telephone, appropriate for the woman's individual needs.

### **4.3 Consistently and effectively provides accurate and comprehensive information to ensure women are fully informed regarding cervical screening.**

#### ***Examples from practice.***

- Communicates effectively to ensure women are informed about all aspects of the cervical screening, e.g. the limitations of Pap tests, including their accuracy; the differences between a screening and a diagnostic services.
- Enhances the education and understanding of women with appropriate use of resources, e.g. using models, audio visual and/or written material/diagrams.
- Provides the women with the opportunity to make informed decisions, e.g. participation on cytology registers.

## **Competency 5 – Maintains a physical and psycho-social environment which promotes safety, security and optimal health care.**

### **5.1 Applies strategies to provide effective, efficient cervical screening services.**

#### ***Examples from Practice.***

- Utilises strategies to provide a cervical screening service for women for whom other services are inappropriate or inaccessible, e.g. women in rural and remote areas, women of non-English speaking background, Aboriginal women etc.

- Employs time management skills to meet the clients' needs.
- Uses feedback from women, both formal and informal to facilitate on-going quality improvement.

**5.2 Demonstrates sensitivity to women's health care needs through the provision of cervical screening services in a safe environment.**

*Examples from practice.*

- Consistently and effectively incorporates infection control principles and standards in the provision of cervical screening services.
- Utilises strategies to ensure that the cervical screening facilities sensitive to women's needs, e.g. examination couch and equipment area is clean and well organised, chairs are positioned to facilitate communication.

**5.3 Ensures the women's physical and psychological comfort throughout the Pap test procedure.**

*Examples from Practice.*

- Utilises strategies to ensure the women's privacy is maintained e.g. using screens/blinds; providing a cover sheet etc.
- Facilitates the active participation of individual women in the Pap test procedure, e.g. through explanation; pacing the procedure according to the woman's needs, ensuring the woman's comfort.
- Uses strategies to accommodate the special needs of women with disabilities using positions accordingly.
- Responds appropriately to an individual woman's indication of pain, discomfort or distress.

**Competency 6 – Acts to maintain the right of women to make informed decisions.**

**6.1 Ensures the provision of Pap test results are according to the needs of the individual women.**

*Examples from practice.*

- Discuss the time and methods of notification of Pap test results, to ensure women are informed and mutually acceptable arrangement is made for receipt of results.
- Encourages women to take responsibility for obtaining their Pap test result.
- Consistently uses effective communication skills so that women understand the significance of the Pap test results and follow up procedures.
- Provides the women with the opportunity for a copy of the Pap test result to be sent to her medical practitioner.

**6.2 Consistently and effectively ensures women are notified of the Pap test results promptly.**

*Examples from practice.*

- Utilises strategies to ensure a Pap test results and recall system is maintained.
- Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge to enable accurate interpretation of Pap test results.
- Uses strategies to make contact with women whose Pap test results are normal within four weeks of receiving the result.
- Implements strategies to ensure women with abnormal Pap test results are contacted as soon as possible (maximum of four weeks).
- Ensures appropriate personnel/agencies are informed if the woman is unable to be contacted, e.g. the cytology laboratory and/or cytology register.
- Maintains accurate documentation of Pap test reports, contact with the woman and follow-up procedures.

### **Problem framing and solving.**

The competencies in this domain relate to the use of a well-developed and specialised knowledge base which has been derived from both education and experience. This knowledge base allows the nurse to effectively assess the client, and make meaningful interpretations, using problem solving strategies (ANCI, 1993; CACCN 1996).

### **Competency 7 – Integrates comprehensive health assessment and interpretive skills to achieve optimal care for women.**

#### **7.1 Obtains a comprehensive and accurate health history assessment and maintains accurate documentation.**

##### ***Examples from practice.***

- Utilises a wide variety of strategies to identify key issues of concern to the woman and responds sensitively, building trust.
- Utilises a systematic approach to obtain and document a comprehensive health history including:
  - First day of last normal menstrual period (LNMP)
  - Obstetric/gynaecological history
  - Pap test history
  - Hormone replacement therapy
  - Contraceptive history
  - Vaginal infections etc.
- Documentation is comprehensive and accurate.

#### **7.2 Demonstrates accurate knowledge and expertise in the performing of the Pap test procedure to ensure optimum sample of cells with minimal discomfort to the woman.**

##### ***Examples from practice.***

- Utilises strategies to ensure minimal discomfort for the woman during the Pap test procedure e.g. checks bladder is empty, warms speculum, utilises appropriate techniques to visualise the cervix.

- Utilises correct technique to ensure optimum sample for adequate Pap test e.g. recognises and visualises transformation zone and squamo-columnar junction; uses appropriate equipment for collection of Pap Test; labels, forms and slides etc.
- Consistently and effectively recognises vulval, vaginal and cervical variations.

## **Teamwork.**

The competencies in this domain relate to the practices essential for the maintenance of effective professional relationships. Competencies include the ability to establish and maintain effective relationships with other members of the health care team, in particular medical practitioners (ANCI 1993, CACCN 1996).

### **Competency 8 – Collaborates with the health care team to achieve desired outcomes.**

#### **8.1 Establishes accurate knowledge of referral services to facilitate access for women.**

##### ***Examples from Practice.***

- Consistently and effectively utilises available referral systems and networks.
- Consistently demonstrates appropriate referral to meet the needs of individual women and the required level of care.
- Communicates effectively to ensure the woman is informed and gives permission prior to referral.

#### **8.2 Establishes and maintains collaborative and consultative relationships with professional colleagues, in particular medical practitioners.**

##### ***Examples from practice.***

- Utilises effective strategies in order to establish a supportive relationship with a medical practitioner within the local community or area health service for referral purposes.
- Recognises differences in cytology reports and the need to clarify differences
  - With medical practitioner
  - With appropriate personnel in the cytology laboratory.
- Recognises the boundaries of nursing practice and the need to refer symptomatic women.
- Utilises a variety of strategies to advocate for women when the need arises.

References:

Australian Nursing Council Incorporated (1993). *National Competencies for the Registered and Enrolled Nurse in Recommended Domains*, ACNI, Canberra.

Confederation of Australian Critical Care Nurses Inc. (1996). *Competency Standards for Specialist Critical Care Nurses*, Confederation of Australian Critical Care Nurses Inc. Hornsby, NSW.