

Fact Sheet 1

Nurse Practitioner Frequently Asked Questions

A nurse practitioner (NP) 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. (ANMC 2006)

FAQ's about Nurse Practitioners:

Who is able to call themselves a nurse practitioner?

The 'title' nurse practitioner is protected by legislation.

Only those who are authorised by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of South Australia (**nmbSA**) are able to call themselves a nurse practitioner in South Australia.

What is the role of nurse practitioner?

The NP role extends beyond the usual scope of nursing practice. They enhance existing services and may provide a service where none exists. The skills and practices associated with a NP are:

- > Advanced clinical assessment
- > Interpretation of diagnostic tests including diagnostic imaging
- > Implementing and monitoring therapeutic regimes
- > Prescribing pharmacological interventions
- > Initiating and receiving appropriate referrals

What are the core components of the nurse practitioner role?

The core components of the NP role include:

- > Commitment to the nursing model of practice that promotes health promotion and preventative health care.
- > Collaboration with other health professionals to optimise health outcomes.
- > Applying high level clinical knowledge and critical thinking skills in providing safe, high quality care.
- > Obtaining comprehensive health histories and performing comprehensive physical assessment in stable, complex and unpredictable situations.
- > Autonomy in clinical practice with advance levels of decision-making.
- > Expert clinical management and monitoring of treatment regimes.
- > Coordinating complex case management including those with multiple and/or serious health conditions.
- > Integrating research that incorporates evidence base practice.
- > Participating as a senior member or leader of the multi-disciplinary team, making and accepting referrals as appropriate.
- > Clinical and professional leadership including a commitment to life-long learning and being a clinical exemplar and mentor for other nursing and midwifery



staff.

- > Prescribing medications from a defined formulary and ordering diagnostic tests.

What is the nurse practitioner scope of practice?

The scope of practice of the nurse practitioner is determined by the context in which the NP is authorised by the **nmbSA** to practice.

For more information visit the **nmbSA** website:

http://www.nmbssa.sa.gov.au/reg_np.html

What is the education preparation required for nurse practitioners?

For a nurse to become a nurse practitioner, relevant post graduate studies must be completed. For further information on pathways to nurse practitioner authorisation, please refer to the nbsa website

http://www.nmbssa.sa.gov.au/reg_np.html

How do nurse practitioners become authorised in South Australia?

The nurse must submit an application to the **nmbSA**.

For more information visit the nbsa website:

http://www.nmbssa.sa.gov.au/reg_np.html

How does a health service establish a nurse practitioner position?

The health service must be strongly committed to supporting the establishment of the NP within a multi-disciplinary team environment.

The health service will identify the need / gap or enhancement of a service where the role would value-add to existing service for clients and the community.

A *Nurse Practitioner Business Case* Template has been developed as a **guide** to assist nursing executive, health care team to submit a business case to the health service executive.

For more information visit the SA Health Nursing and Midwifery Office website:

www.nursingsa.com/prof_practitioner.php

What is the difference between advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners?

Advanced practice nursing defines a level of nursing practice that utilises extended and expanded skills, experience and knowledge in assessment, planning, implementation, diagnosis and evaluation of the care required. Nurses practising at this level are educationally prepared at post-graduate level and may work in a specialist or generalist capacity. However, the basis of advanced practice is the high degree of knowledge, skill and experience that is applied within the nurse-patient/client relationship to achieve optimal outcomes through critical analysis, problem solving and accurate decision-making.

Advanced practice nursing forms the basis for the role of nurse practitioner. The nurse practitioner role is advanced nursing practise defined by a legal framework. The Legislation allows for prescribing and referral, in addition to admitting privileges to health care facilities.

Are Nurse Practitioners the same as General Practice Nurses?

Nurse practitioners are not the same as general practice nurses. The role of the registered nurse in general practice varies according to the population profile of the general practice, the general practice structure, and employment arrangements.

The table below highlights some of the differences between nurse practitioner and general practice nurses:

Nurse Practitioner	General Practice Nurse
Registered Nurse	Can be either Registered Nurse / Midwife or Enrolled Nurse
Post registration education requirements (Masters level)	No formal post registration or enrolment education requirements
Requires post registration authorisation by nmbSA	Not required



Are nurse practitioners a substitute for medical officers?

It is well recognised that a health care professional cannot meet the complexity of today's client's health needs by themselves.

They are part of multidisciplinary health care team.

Nurse practitioners are not substitutes for medical officers. Nurse Practitioners are, first and foremost, nurses, with advanced educational preparation and experience who are authorised to practice in extended clinical nursing roles across the acute, aged care and community settings.

Nurse Practitioners have developed the skills and knowledge to extend their role to include areas that may have been 'traditionally' performed by other health professionals, such as, prescribing medications and ordering diagnostic tests.

Where else can I get information about nurse practitioners?

For further information regarding nurse practitioners please visit the following websites:

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council:

www.anmc.org.au/index.php

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners

www.nursepractitioners.org.au

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (SA Branch)

<http://www.acnp.org.au/>

SA Health Nursing and Midwifery Office

www.nursingsa.com

References

N3ET National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce Myth Busters (Feb 2006)

<http://www.nnnet.gov.au/mythbuster.htm>

ACT Health: Nursing and Midwifery Office Nurse Practitioners in the ACT

Frequently Asked Questions (2006)

<http://www.health.act.gov.au/>

