

The Role of the Registered Nurse in Nephrology

According to the *Nephrology Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice* (Gomez, 2022), nephrology registered nursing, “incorporates the diagnosis and treatment of human response and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations affected by kidney disease. Nephrology nursing specialty practice integrates the art and science of caring and focuses on the protection, promotion and optimization of health and human functioning, prevention of illness and injury, facilitation of suffering through compassionate presence” (pp.1-2).

Nephrology registered nurses (RNs) work in various multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary environments. Most nephrology RN practice focuses on the patient population with identified kidney disease. Nephrology RNs also practice within the community in the prevention and identification of kidney disease. Each state has a nurse practice act or state statute equivalent that is the legal authority for nursing practice in each state. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (www.ncsbn.org) provides links to each state’s boards of nursing. Wherever they practice, nephrology RNs use critical thinking skills to respond to the needs of individuals with kidney disease. Nephrology RNs participate with healthcare organizations and providers at the state, local, and community levels in efforts to reduce health disparities (Gomez, 2022). Nephrology RNs are mindful of resource utilization while implementing strategies and interventions to promote optimal outcomes, most appropriate to the healthcare consumer and situation.

ANNA recognizes the contributions of licensed and unlicensed personnel such as licensed practical nurses/licensed vocational nurses (LPNs/LVNs) and unlicensed personnel, including but not limited to medical assistants (MAs), patient care technicians (PCTs), and certified clinical hemodialysis technicians (CCHTs) in the delivery of care for individuals with kidney disease. The nephrology RN provides clinical supervision of licensed and unlicensed personnel per state practice acts or state statute equivalent and the applicable Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regulations. These statutes may limit the delegation of nursing care activities or interventions to licensed and unlicensed personnel. Refer to ANNA’s Position Statement on Delegation of Nursing Care Activities (2022). ANNA maintains that other licensed and unlicensed personnel do not have the educational requirements, or skill set, to fulfill the role components of a RN, refer to ANNA Position Statement Delegation of Nursing Care Activities and Delegation of Nursing Care Activities Addendum.

It is the position of ANNA that the nephrology RN:

- Is required in the care of every individual with kidney disease.
- Is the most qualified individual to deliver the most informed, high-quality care for individuals with kidney disease.
- The nephrology RN needs to be accountable to ensure adequate orientation, training and demonstration of competency within the area of care provision, and maintenance of those competencies, e.g. cannulation in low volume situations.
- Should practice to the full scope of their license.
- Has a vital role in addressing structural and systemic inequities that deny necessities to those receiving care.

- Provides the leadership necessary for care collaboration and coordination, assuring patient safety and the delivery of appropriate care.
- Is accountable for delivering care within the framework of the nursing process.

Page 2

Role of the Registered Nurse in Nephrology

- Evaluates assessment findings to formulate nursing diagnoses and prioritize problems according to patient need, ensuring it addresses the kidney disease spectrum.
- Engages the patient in mutual goal setting and collaboration in developing a plan of care directed toward achieving identified goals. The effectiveness of the plan of care in goal achievement is evaluated through patient outcomes.
- The education and skill set required for the nursing process, including assessment, diagnosis, outcome identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation, are essential role components of RN education and training and cannot be delegated.
- Educates individuals with kidney disease to promote health and wellness and assesses the effectiveness of the teaching strategies. Since education involves the nursing process, it cannot be delegated.
- Is an active participant of the interdisciplinary team to plan and effectively provide required care.
- Coordinates individual-centered care.
- Acts as a guide and advocate.
- Ensures informed consent for treatment decisions.
- Promotes the maximal level of individual-desired independence.
- Ensures an ethically sound practice and confronts ethical challenges through application of the *Nephrology Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice (2022)* and the American Nurses Association *Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015)*.
- Actively participates in professional role development activities:
 - Continuing education.
 - Peer mentoring.
 - Quality assessment and performance improvement.
 - Review and clinical application of research findings to assure evidence-based practice.
 - Promotes nephrology certification.

ANNA is the leading organization representing nephrology nurses who span the nephrology registered nursing spectrum. With advocacy as part of the strategic plan, preserving the RN role and ensuring every individual with kidney disease has care provided by qualified RNs is essential to ANNA's mission.

References

American Nephrology Nurses Association. (2022). *Delegation of nursing activities* [Position statement]. <https://www.annanurse.org/download/reference/health/position/delegation.pdf>.

American Nurses Association. (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses*. American Nurses Publishing.

Gomez, N. (2022). *Nephrology nursing scope and standards of practice* (9th ed.). American Nephrology Nurses Association.

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ANNA Position Statements are reviewed and reaffirmed biennially.