

NAON Position Statement Role and Value of the Orthopaedic Nurse

Issue

With the increasing health care needs of orthopaedic patients and their families, as well as rising healthcare costs, orthopaedic nurses are more challenged than ever to deliver safe, quality patient care. Professional orthopaedic nurses play integral roles in all aspects of orthopaedic care delivery in various practice settings, including outpatient and acute care, extended or long-term care, home care, and community environments (NAON, Scope and Standards, 2002). This variety of care delivery settings has led to an increased diversity in orthopaedic nursing roles (Kneale and Davis, 2005). Orthopaedic nurses are expected to deliver safe, quality care in the prevention and treatment of any patho-physiological musculoskeletal disorders. Thus, providing clarity to the role and promoting the value of the orthopaedic nurse is vital to orthopaedic nursing practice.

Position

The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses supports:

1. The role and value of the orthopaedic nurse in the treatment and care delivery for musculoskeletal disorders caused by disease processes, injuries or impairments.
2. The role of the orthopaedic nurse in advancing musculoskeletal health care through professional development and promotion of excellence in orthopaedic research, education and nursing practice.
3. A professional nursing environment of inquiry, utilizing evidence-based practice and research to identify practice issues and trends in healthcare, to improve delivery of safe, quality patient care.
4. The need for orthopaedic nurses to possess and maintain the appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies specific to the orthopaedic specialty.

Background

Nursing involves protecting, promoting and optimizing health, preventing illness and injury, alleviating suffering through diagnosis and treatment of human response and advocating for care of individuals, families, communities and populations (ANA, 2004). Orthopaedic nursing practice facilitates the promotion of wellness and self-care, the maintenance of health, and the prevention of injury and illness in the care of individuals with disorders of the musculoskeletal system (NAON, Scope and Standards, 2002). Based on competency and specialty training, the professional orthopaedic nurse:

- may work independently or collaboratively with a multidisciplinary healthcare team (including patients and families) providing appropriate, effective, and efficient care and education
- is able to assess, identify nursing diagnoses and treat patient conditions for which orthopaedic patients are at risk, including, but not limited to, pain, impaired physical mobility, self-care deficits, impaired skin integrity, body image disturbance, and post-trauma response
- bases clinical judgment and decision making on the nursing process, nursing theory, and research, as well as specific orthopaedic knowledge
- performs holistic assessments of individuals and/or families, with special focus on impact of musculoskeletal conditions on self-care needs, environmental management, resources, and support systems
- develops, implements and continuously evaluates a plan of care, encouraging a multidisciplinary team approach to making patient care decisions
- maintains current orthopaedic knowledge and shares that knowledge with other health professionals
- participates in peer review to assure competent practice
- serves as educator, mentor, and role model for nursing colleagues, students, and others
- participates in professional nursing associations that promote educational and professional activities.
- applies research and evidence-based practice in the various clinical practice settings
- participates in/conducts clinical research and shares findings through presentation and/or publication
- maintains and promotes political awareness and is proactive concerning health care issues

Advanced orthopaedic nursing practice requires substantial theoretical knowledge and clinical expertise in orthopaedic nursing and at least a master's degree preparation. The advanced orthopaedic nurse:

- incorporates all the above aspects of the professional orthopaedic nursing role
- provides expert care to individuals diagnosed with musculoskeletal conditions
- educates and supports community groups interested in health promotion and illness/injury prevention
- may fulfill various roles including direct caregiver, consultant, educator, researcher, administrator, and/or primary health care provider

Value

“The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses promotes a culture of professional collaboration developed through trust, respect, integrity and passion for the specialty of orthopaedics” (NAON Value Statement, 2009).

Specialized orthopaedic knowledge enhances the nurse’s ability to:

- serve as an advocate for patients and families in the various care delivery settings
- provide competent care, anticipating specific patient needs and potential problems throughout the health care continuum
- represent nurses as a vital link in the interdisciplinary collaboration process with patients, families and other health care providers
- provide consistent delivery of care that ensures health care opportunities for all consumers

The increased knowledge and expertise of the orthopaedic nurse helps to promote prevention and early recognition of complications. This specialized knowledge also helps to decrease cost of health care through:

- timely, appropriate identification of patient needs
- effective and efficient health care delivery
- timely, appropriate health education, maintenance, and prevention programs

Advanced practice orthopaedic nurses, as primary health care providers, enhance the delivery of accessible and affordable health care for all consumers.

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