

AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS FOR NEONATAL NURSES

Third Edition



AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF NEONATAL NURSES INC.





AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF
NEONATAL NURSES INC.

AUSTRALIAN
STANDARDS FOR
NEONATAL NURSES

Third Edition

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF NEONATAL NURSES INC. AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS FOR NEONATAL NURSES

Third Edition

Editor

Shelley Reid

RN RM BAppSc(Nursing) BA(Psych) MPH(Health Promotion)
Postgrad Dip Editing and Publishing

Working group for the third edition

Assoc. Professor Sandie Bredemeyer OAM
RN RM PhD

Melissah Burnett
RN Masters of Nursing (Neonatal Intensive Care)

Jacqueline McGregor
RN Masters of Nursing (Neonatal Intensive Care)

Robyn Richards
RN RM Master in Adult Education

Suza Trajkovski
RN Lecturer and PhD candidate

Dr Karen Walker
RN PhD

Acknowledgements

Consumer review was provided by the ACNN Neonatal Nurse Education Special Interest Group.

ACNN thanks all contributors to the development of previous editions of these standards.

Front cover photo: Kristina Jepp and Oscar.

Back cover photo: Kristina with Oscar and Lucas.

Photos by permission of Jonas and Kristina Jepp.

© ACNN 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced except as permitted by the Australian Copyright Act, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-646-58754-7

Contents

Neonatal Nursing in Australia	5
Summary of standards	6
Domains	
<i>Family centred care</i>	8
<i>Clinical practice</i>	12
<i>Leadership and teamwork</i>	16
<i>Professional development</i>	19
<i>Research</i>	21

The Australian College of Neonatal Nurses (ACNN) is the national, not-for-profit organisation that serves as the peak professional body for neonatal nurses in all states and territories of Australia.

Philosophy

ACNN believes the neonatal nurse has a responsibility to provide a high standard of care for preterm, sick and recovering newborn infants within an individualised, developmentally supportive and family-centred framework.

ACNN believes neonatal nursing should have a national focus with standards for clinical practice, research and education.

ACNN believes there should be active collaboration and representation between ACNN members, professional organisations and other associations involved with perinatal care, clinical facilities and academic institutions.

ACNN provides direction and leadership for registered nurses thereby enhancing their professional development within the speciality.

ACNN advocates for neonatal nurses by

- Providing expert advice to, and professional communication with government bodies and other professional organisations on matters pertaining to neonatal nursing.
- Facilitating close and continuing contact with other professional organisations pertaining to neonatology/perinatology.
- Fostering international liaisons to promote neonatal nursing in Australia.
- Acting in an advisory capacity on the formulation and implementation of postgraduate neonatal nursing education programs.

ACNN supports professional development for neonatal nurses by

- Promoting the formulation and dissemination of standards of care for neonatal nursing practice.
- Organising a national conference where neonatal nurses are informed by current research and can network with colleagues.
- Promoting and facilitating research relating to neonatal care.
- Providing and promoting forums at regional, national and international levels, for the exchange of information and ideas pertaining to neonatal care.
- Contributing to international developments in neonatal care.
- Offering scholarships.
- Providing professional practice tools and publications.

Under its former name, the Australian Neonatal Nurses Association, ACNN undertook a national project to develop standards of practice for all Australian nurses working and specialising in the care of the newborn infant. Based on the Advanced Nurse Competency project¹ the first edition was launched in 2001 and revised following consultation with members in 2006.² It is envisaged by ACNN that these standards be used as a framework for the development of neonatal nursing curricula and as a tool for clinical practice assessment.

References

1. McMillan M, Keating D, Little P, Madjar I, Bujack E, Andrews J, Johnson R (1997). *Competency Standards for the Advanced Nurses*. Australian Nursing Federation, Victorian Branch.
2. Norris C, Reid S (Eds) (2007). *ACNN Competency Standards for Neonatal Nurses*. www.acnn.org.au

NEONATAL NURSING IN AUSTRALIA

Definition

Neonatal nursing is the speciality that provides care to newborns and families when the newborn's health needs require more resources and support than is available in postnatal wards. Neonatal nursing ranges from highly complex intensive care to minimally supportive care. Newborn patients may be preterm or term, with variable lengths of stay as determined by health problems and maturity. Neonatal nurses work as part of an interdisciplinary team.

Neonatal nursing provides the bridge between midwifery and paediatric nursing, with a focus on the first 28 days of postnatal life. The neonatal nurse requires knowledge and skills encompassing antenatal factors, stages of fetal development, neonatal resuscitation and transition to extra-uterine life, developmentally appropriate care, complications of prematurity and illness, congenital abnormalities, neonatal surgery, breastfeeding and nutrition. Neonatal nursing care is individualised, developmentally supportive and family-centred.

Scope of clinical practice

Neonatal nurses may work in intensive care, high dependency or special care baby units. They may also work in neonatal transport services or they may continue to work with families in the community during the immediate post discharge period.

Standards for neonatal nursing

The role of the neonatal nurse incorporates advanced clinical and ethical decision making, critical thinking, counselling skills, cultural awareness, application of research findings, and appropriate use of technology. Neonatal nurses require standards as a specific measure of quality for their practice¹; as the professional body for Australian neonatal nurses, ACNN has undertaken to set the practice standards for registered nurses and midwives engaged in neonatal care. These standards are objective and provide a clear description of the characteristics and qualities expected of neonatal nurses in the Australian context.

Use of standards

These standards for neonatal nurses incorporate and expand on those set out in the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council documents National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia and the Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia. The standards may be used to guide curriculum development for postgraduate courses in neonatal nursing, and to assess the professional development of nurses working in neonatal care as they progress from novice to expert.

As some babies may be patients for more than the first few days of postnatal life, the term 'infant' is used throughout this document and refers to both newborn babies and those who have prolonged hospitalisation periods due to prematurity or complex health problems.

These standards are written for the neonatal nurse who may be a registered nurse, a registered midwife or a nurse practitioner. The term 'nurse' when used in this document refers to these three categories.

Reference

1. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006). *Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse*. Canberra: ANMC.

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

Domain: Family centred care

Standard 1: Promotes the participation of parents/ families in the care of their infant.

The neonatal nurse practises consistently within a family centred model of care. On this foundation the neonatal nurse uses proactive and facilitative approaches in working with the infant, family and health care team to meet the needs of individual infants.

Standard 2: Advocates and protects the rights of individuals and groups.

The neonatal nurse uses specific knowledge and understanding to undertake action in the interest of infants and parents. This action is guided, rather than directed, by protocols. The professional judgement of the neonatal nurse generates trust.

Standard 3: Develops therapeutic and caring relationships.

The neonatal nurse communicates in a manner that is open, responsive, non judgmental, facilitative and collegial. The neonatal nurse is sensitive to the vulnerability of infants and parents/families. These characteristics are reflected in relationships with individuals and groups.

Domain: Clinical practice

Standard 4: Uses theory, research evidence, observations and experience in decision making.

This standard reflects the ability of the neonatal nurse to attend to multiple stimuli simultaneously and to focus quickly on the needs of infants and parents. While maintaining a comprehensive approach, the neonatal nurse uses a repertoire of processes in clinical decision making rather than being constrained by a single approach. The neonatal nurse frequently makes these decisions in challenging circumstances. The neonatal nurse demonstrates initiative and increasing independence in routine practice.

Standard 5: Practises in accordance with the professional, legal and ethical responsibilities affecting neonatal nursing practice.^{1,2}

Lawful practice is a requirement for all nurses. The neonatal nurse is able to apply knowledge of the law relating to practice, to contribute to policy development and to intervene when there is actual or potential compromise to an infant, parent or colleague.

Standard 6: Fulfils the conduct requirement of the neonatal nursing profession.

The neonatal nurse critically reviews individual skills and nursing practices. The potential for mismatches between parent and infant needs and existing practices is recognised, resulting in practice and policy review.

Domain: Leadership and teamwork

Standard 7: Engages in collaborative practice to achieve planned outcomes.

The neonatal nurse instigates, maintains and uses collegial networks in a mature, confident and assertive manner to achieve positive outcomes.

Standard 8: Provides a supportive environment for colleagues.

The neonatal nurse instils confidence and trust in colleagues through demonstration of sensitivity towards others. The neonatal nurse assumes responsibility for teaching and management functions, acting as a role model. Confidence in practice is evident in the actions of the neonatal nurse.

Standard 9: Manages the use of staff and physical resources.

Context-specific knowledge and skills enable the neonatal nurse to anticipate the need for and effective use of staff and physical resources.

Standard 10: Engages in ethically justifiable nursing practice.

Reflection on experience enables the neonatal nurse to approach challenging ethical situations. The neonatal nurse initiates and guides ethical decisions with consistency, clarity and tolerance.

Domain: Professional development

Standard 11: Communication.

The knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that support effective professional practice and proficiency in procedural tasks are collectively called professional skill. The development of robust communication is one of the most important skills for the neonatal nurse to master. As such, communication is the basis for professional performance and is essential for the provision of effective, safe and competent family centred care.

Standard 12: Acts to enhance the professional development of self and others.

The neonatal nurse demonstrates commitment to ongoing professional development, using the best available evidence, standards and guidelines to maintain best practice.

Standard 13: Engages in activities to improve nursing practice.

The neonatal nurse uses reliable evidence and meaningful knowledge as a basis to improve practice. The neonatal nurse adopts a creative and resourceful approach to the development of practice. The neonatal nurse uses a range of processes to contribute to nursing knowledge and takes opportunities to be involved in research that will enhance professional knowledge and contribute to the validation of nursing practice.

Domain: Research

Standard 14: Understands the importance of research in nursing practice.

Research is the basis of best practice. Neonatal nurses need to understand the research process, take opportunities to be involved in research that will enhance professional knowledge and contribute to nursing practice, and seek opportunities to update practice using current studies and findings. Research knowledge includes an understanding of the ethical principles for conducting research and the different research methods used, how to review the literature, the ability to critically analyse results and how to translate findings into practice.

DOMAIN: FAMILY CENTRED CARE

The philosophy of family centred care is considered a central tenet in providing care for the infant and their family. Family centred care is an approach to care that can be described as “a way of caring for children and their families within health services which ensures care is planned around the whole family, not just the individual child/person, and in which all family members are recognised as care recipients.”¹ Family centred care focuses on the health and wellbeing of the infant and the family, through the development of a respectful partnership between the health care professional and parents.²

The key elements of family centred care as proposed by the Institute of Family Centred Care³ include:

- *Recognising the family as a constant in the infant’s life.*
- *Facilitating parent-professional collaboration at all levels of health care.*
- *Respecting the racial, ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity of families.*
- *Recognising family strengths and individuality and understanding the varying methods used for coping.*
- *Sharing complete and unbiased information with families on a continuous basis.*
- *Encouraging and facilitating family-to-family support and networking.*
- *Responding to child and family developmental needs as part of health care practices.*
- *Adopting policies and practices that provide families with emotional and financial support.*
- *Designing health care that is flexible, culturally competent and responsive to family needs.*

Neonatal nurses assist families through facilitating parental involvement in infant care.² The family is considered an integral member of the health care team and is actively involved in all aspects of their infant’s care and decision making. Neonatal nurses respect, support and guide families throughout the hospitalisation period. In the neonatal setting, it must be a consideration that siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends may be integral to each family’s wellbeing. Health care services providing care to infants and their families should incorporate into policy and practice key elements of family centred care.

Neonatal nurses acknowledge the special needs of infants who do not survive and provide support for the family when the need for neonatal palliative care arises, in accordance with the ACNN palliative care guidelines.⁴

References

1. Shields L, Pratt J, Hunter J (2006). Family centred care: a review of qualitative studies. *Journal of Clinical Studies* 15:10, 1317-1323.
2. Trajkovski S, Schmied V, Vickers M, Jackson D (2012). Neonatal nurses’ perspective of family-centred care: a qualitative study. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 21, 2477-2487.
3. Institute for Family Centered Care (2005). Family-centered care: Frequently asked questions. Available at www.familycenteredcare.org
4. ACNN (2011). *Palliative care in the neonatal nursery. Guidelines for neonatal nurses in Australia.* www.acnn.org.au

Standard 1: Promotes the participation of parents/families in the care of their baby.

The neonatal nurse practises consistently within a family centred model of care. On this basis the neonatal nurse uses proactive and facilitative approaches in working with the infant, family and health care team to meet the needs of individual infants.

Element 1.1 Promotes involvement of the parents as participants in the process of care.

Cues

- Uses strategies to encourage and maintain the participation of parents/family in planning, delivering and evaluating the care of their infant.
- Identifies the needs of parents and their infant and meet those needs through planned and opportunistic activities.
- Implements strategies that reflect regard for personal dignity, individual potential and the integrity of the infant and parents as individuals.
- Uses a high level of sensitivity to identify individuality and the cultural needs of the family.
- Recognises stresses placed on parents during their encounters in the neonatal nursery and provides support for parents in their decision making.

- Guides and supports the parents in their transition to independence as a family.
- Supports families during end of life care according to their individual needs and the best interests of their infant.

Element 1.2 Empowers the parents/family to facilitate the attainment, maintenance and restoration of optimal health and well being for the family.

Cues

- Develops education programs appropriate to parental needs with due consideration given to the principles of learning and teaching.
- Provides information for parents with due regard for safety and consistent, up-to-date information.
- Provides appropriate learning resources to parents.
- Maximises opportunities for parent education during the course of care.
- Provides consistent positive reinforcement within the context of the family's culture, both formally and informally.

Element 1.3 Promotes continuity of nursing care.

Cues

- Uses knowledge of systems and resources to negotiate optimal continuum of care for the infant and family.
- Transmits all information needed for continuity of care using a range of media.
- Provides informative, concise reports and communicates a plan of care.
- Analyses and documents results of investigative procedures to inform ongoing care.
- Ensures the continued availability of resources needed for nursing care.
- Maintains records to enhance continuity of care.
- Analyses and evaluates variations from planned care and reviews ongoing care.
- Negotiates work distribution according to infant and family needs to promote continuity of care.
- Requests to care for the same infant or infants each day as appropriate.
- Considers models of care that promote the continuity model of care.

Element 1.4 Collaborates with interdisciplinary health care teams to provide comprehensive care of the infant and family.

Cues

- Practises as part of the interdisciplinary health care team and actively involves other health professionals in the care of infant and family.
- Works collaboratively with the interdisciplinary team to ensure infant care is coordinated to achieve agreed health outcomes.
- Considers and provides options when confronted with differing practices.
- Reviews parent satisfaction with management/communication of the interdisciplinary team.

Standard 2: Advocates and protects the rights of individuals and groups.

The neonatal nurse uses specific knowledge and understanding to undertake action on behalf of infants and parents. This action is guided, rather than directed, by protocols. The professional judgement of the neonatal nurse generates trust.

Element 2.1 Acts to maintain the rights of individuals/groups.

Cues

- Interacts with the infant and the parents to reflect a non-judgemental, accepting manner.
- Provides the parents with relevant information about the identity and roles of health care providers.
- Provides advice to individuals/groups about their rights relevant to neonatal care.
- Encourages and actively supports individuals/groups when they are seeking to exercise their rights.
- Advises appropriate members of the health care team of the parent's expressed needs, preferences and decisions.

- Empowers parents through skilful advocacy, consultation, individualised care, and protection of rights.
- Identifies structures, policies or practices that inhibit individuals/groups from exercising their rights; discusses and refers management options to the appropriate team for consideration if required.
- Advocates on behalf of the infant and parent who are unable to exercise their rights.

Element 2.2 Acts to ensure confidentiality of information.

Cues

- Restricts discussions about individuals or groups to members of the health care team within the boundaries of a health care setting.
- Advises the parents on their right to confidentiality.
- Maintains privacy when information is obtained from a parent.
- Avoids use of any information that may identify the infant or parent unless it is required for neonatal care.
- Seeks individual permission to disclose any information not immediately relevant to the provision of care.
- Does not disclose information to any interested parties without the prior consent of parents.
- Adheres to statutory and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct when dealing with the release of information.
- Locates records and written information in a secure area.

Standard 3: Develops therapeutic and caring relationships.

The neonatal nurse communicates in a manner that is open, responsive, non-judgmental, facilitative and collegial. The neonatal nurse is sensitive to the vulnerability of infants and parents/families. These characteristics are reflected in relationships with individuals and groups.

Element 3.1 Establishes an environment conducive to the development of therapeutic relationships.

Cues

- Demonstrates respect for individuals or groups through positive, caring interaction and effective communication which achieves defined goals in therapeutic nursing relationships.
- Conducts interactions in a way that demonstrates concern for the individual or family.
- Ensures parents are aware of their infant's current status and subsequent care.
- Negotiates nursing partnerships where appropriate.
- Maintains professional boundaries and acknowledges potential boundary violations.
- Explores constructive ways to negotiate conflict or issues of concern with parents.
- Addresses the vulnerability of the parents and infant to enhance a positive outcome.
- Reviews outcomes of the interaction with the parents.
- Concludes the parent-nurse relationship satisfactorily.
- Offers the parents primary level counselling and/or makes appropriate referral as required.
- Formulates nursing care plans incorporating a counselling role in collaboration with the health team.

Element 3.2 Ensures that parents/families receive and understand relevant and current information about health care.

Cues

- Provides explanations, alternatives and consequences of proposed health care options.
- Informs the parents of changes/coming events.
- Further elaborates the explanations given to the parents by other health professionals.
- Discusses a range of available options with the parents.
- Seeks feedback that checks the level of parental understanding.
- Defines and monitors the nature, purpose and membership of a therapeutic relationship.
- Values the unique contribution of each individual group member.
- Informs support groups of current and relevant changes in health care.
- Arranges consultations with relevant health care providers.

Element 3.3 Provides support for the social, educational, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs of parents/families.

Cues

Encourages parents to express their fears or feelings in a safe environment.

- Assesses that the level of emotional response by the nurse to the infant or parent is appropriate.
- Provides individual counselling to allow parents to express their fears or feelings.
- Accommodates spiritual and cultural needs appropriate to the social context and the needs of the parents and family.
- Facilitates opportunities to express spiritual and cultural practices.
- Facilitates colleagues in meeting the cultural and spiritual need of families.
- Recognises anxiety, fear or other forms of distress.
- Provides an appropriate environment for the distressed individual.
- Institutes measures to relieve distress and supports individuals, families or significant others.
- Explores further strategies for coping with health changes in the infant.
- Assists parents in reaching acceptance of their infant's illness/disability/distress/loss.

DOMAIN: CLINICAL PRACTICE

The neonatal nurse works with preterm and sick infants and their families in a variety of clinical settings and has specific knowledge, skills and attributes to provide direct clinical intervention and follow up care as part of an interdisciplinary team. The neonatal nurse works within an individualised, developmentally supportive, family centred care framework.

Standard 4: Uses theory, research evidence, observations and experience in decision making.

Reflects the ability of the neonatal nurse to gather and evaluate information from a range of sources using multiple approaches to decision making to ensure appropriate care.

Element 4.1 Assessment of the infant and family's situation.

Cues

- Responds to individual needs and cues of each infant and family by prioritising and initiating changes in management and care.
- Collaborates and liaises with the interdisciplinary team.

Element 4.2 Assessment of the infant's clinical status.

Cues

- Uses a systematic and focussed approach to assess the infant using highly developed and specialised skills.
- Gathers, interprets, integrates and communicates information from all relevant sources to ensure best practice.
- Interprets the clinical status of the infant and is able to prioritise and initiate changes in management and care.
- Utilises evidence-based nursing practice and research findings.

Element 4.3 Initiates a plan of care to address the needs of infants and families.

Cues

- Refers to and incorporates information from other health professionals when planning care.
- Justifies decisions and care strategies and clearly communicates decisions.
- Develops a partnership to accommodate the unique requirements of each infant and family in the care plan.
- Appropriately documents the plan and communicates with the interdisciplinary team.
- Analyses information from verbal and written reports to plan nursing management.
- Documents plan of care to ensure continuity of care and evaluation of interventions.

Element 4.4 Makes nursing decisions in complex situations.

Cues

- Identifies parameters for the safety of the infant and family.
- Monitors the effects of independent decisions.
- Makes decisions with the parents/family based on their expressed needs.
- Respects the need for confidentiality.
- Evaluates the action taken and the care given.
- Evaluates parental understanding of decisions that are made.
- Challenges practice decisions and treatment when appropriate.
- Maintains focus when multiple concurrent stimuli are presented.

Standard 5: Practises in accordance with professional, legal and ethical responsibilities affecting neonatal nursing practice.

Professional, lawful and ethical practice is a requirement for all nurses. The neonatal nurse is able to apply knowledge of the professional, legal and ethical responsibilities relating to practice, to contribute to policy development and to intervene when there is actual or potential compromise of an infant, parent or colleague.

Element 5.1 Functions in accordance with the code of professional conduct for nurses.

The cues for this element are reproduced and adapted from the *ANMC Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia (2008)*.

- [Practises] *in a safe and competent manner.*
- [Practises] *in accordance with the standards of the profession and broader health system.*
- [Practises and behaves] *in accordance with laws relevant to the profession and practice of nursing.*
- [Respects] *the dignity, culture, ethnicity, values and beliefs of the infant and family receiving care, and that of their colleagues.*
- [Treats] *personal information obtained in a professional capacity as private and confidential.*
- [Provides] *impartial, honest and accurate information in relation to nursing care and health care products.*
- [Supports] *the health, wellbeing and informed decision making [of each family for their infant].*
- [Promotes and preserves] *the trust and privilege inherent in the relationship between the nurse and family receiving care.*
- [Maintains and builds] *on the community's trust and confidence in the nursing profession.*
- [Practises neonatal nursing in a reflective and ethical manner.]

Element 5.2 Functions in accordance with legislation affecting nursing practice.

Cues for this element are reproduced from the *ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse (2006) Standard 1.1*.

- *Identifies legislation governing nursing practice.*
- *Describes nursing practice within the requirements of common law.*
- *Describes and adheres to legal requirements for medications.*
- *Identifies the legal implications of nursing interventions.*
- *Demonstrates awareness of the legal implications of nursing practice.*
- *Identifies and explains the effects of legislation on the care of infants and families.*
- *Identifies and explains the effects of legislation in the area of health.*
- *Identifies unprofessional practice as it relates to confidentiality and privacy legislation.*

Element 5.3 Functions in accordance with the code of ethics for nurses.

Cues for this element are reproduced and adapted from the *ANMC Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia (2008)*.

- [Values] *quality nursing care for [the infant and family].*
- [Values] *respect and kindness for self and others.*
- [Values] *the diversity of people.*
- [Values] *access to quality nursing and health care for all [infants and families].*
- [Values] *informed decision making.*
- [Values] *a culture of safety in nursing and health care.*
- [Values] *ethical management of information.*
- [Values] *a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable environment to promote health and wellbeing.*

Element 5.4 Functions in accordance with local policy and procedures.

Cues

- Makes distinctions among principles of law, health department guidelines and recommendations, and local policies and practices.

- Identifies inconsistencies between legal principles and local policies and practices.
- Refers to the appropriate administrative unit any inconsistencies between legal principles and local policies and practices for clarification and review as appropriate.
- Incorporates changes in legislation and government policy into local policies, practices and procedures.

Element 5.5 Acts to promote protection and safety of infants, families, self and others.

Cues

- Follows policies and procedures to provide for the safety and protection of infants and parents and to prevent or minimise potential hazards.
- Complies with current occupational health and safety legislation.
- Identifies breaches of occupational safety and health standards and takes action to address the situation.
- Actively promotes environmental safety and health standards.
- Maintains patient safety and wellbeing by consistent and independent attention to detail.

Element 5.6 Intervenes when patient care is compromised by unsafe or illegal practice.

Cues

- Identifies situations where intervention is necessary to prevent harm or where the code for professional conduct, code for ethics or legislation (as cited in 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) is contravened.
- Identifies and explains the appropriate action to be taken in specified circumstances.
- Implements strategies to minimise unsafe practice.
- Evaluates alternative strategies for intervention and their likely outcomes.
- Challenges interventions that appear inappropriate and proposes alternatives.
- Bases action on experience and clinical judgement within statutory and common law when the family's decisions contravene safe and accepted practice.

Standard 6: Fulfils the conduct requirements of the neonatal nursing profession.

The neonatal nurse critically reviews individual skills and nursing practices. The potential for mismatch between parent and infant needs and existing practices is recognised, resulting in practice and policy review.

Element 6.1 The neonatal nurse practices within the limits of own abilities and qualifications.

Cues

- Reviews own abilities in relation to current work allocation.
- Negotiates a patient load using a realistic assessment of own abilities and the complexity of infant needs.
- Considers change in the needs of infant or parent as an opportunity to reflect on own clinical practice, knowledge and skill development.
- Organises own workload.
- Implements time management strategies to achieve an optimum level of care.
- Facilitates the practice of colleagues and readily offers assistance.
- Works both autonomously and as a team member.

Element 6.2 Undertakes integrated neonatal nursing care activities.

Cues

- Delivers care derived from an accurate, comprehensive and current knowledge base.
- Uses protocols to guide rather than dictate practice.
- Performs nursing activities with precision, dexterity and efficiency.
- Develops flexible and creative approaches in challenging situations.
- Provides rationales for the choice of nursing action or nursing care.
- Implements proactive strategies to address and minimise potential complications.
- Makes constructive responses to unexpected or rapidly changing situations.
- Monitors the infant response and behaviour throughout each intervention and adjusts care appropriately.
- Provides cue-based care to meet the needs of the infant.

- Anticipates infant needs based on knowledge of expected and potential outcomes.
- Responds immediately to a clinical situation and escalates appropriately.
- Demonstrates a high level of common sense.
- Consults with other health professionals as required.
- Provides a level of care based on neonatal nursing principles at his or her expected standard of practice.
- Challenges management decisions when appropriate and provides suggestions for alternative management.
- Discusses with colleagues and health care professionals the best options for management based on the available evidence.

DOMAIN: LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

All neonatal nurses have a clinical leadership role and can directly influence the quality of their patient care as well as contributing more effectively to the neonatal clinical team through the development of sound leadership skills. Clinical leadership and teamwork concerns the development of nurses who are effective at managing themselves and their work, building sound relationships, focussing on the infant and their family, using critical reflection, developing evidence-based practice, networking and being professionally and politically aware. Effective teamwork depends on the ability of team members to support colleagues using current knowledge, effective skills, positive attitude and fair workloads. Effective utilisation of communication, leadership skills and knowledge of teamwork improves the workplace environment.

Standard 7: Engages in collaborative practice to achieve planned outcomes.

Collaboration is complex and involved, requiring maturity and political astuteness to deal effectively with current issues. The neonatal nurse instigates, maintains and uses collegial networks in a mature, confident and assertive manner to achieve positive outcomes.

Element 7.1 Consults with a range of health care professionals

Cues

- Develops and maintains collaborative relationships with other nursing colleagues and health professionals.
- Acknowledges the interdependent roles of various health care professionals within the health care team.
- Seeks advice when the needs of the infant require expertise beyond one's own abilities and qualifications.
- Uses outcomes of consultation to negotiate care.
- Uses collegial networks for referrals to meet the needs of infants, parents and staff.
- Promotes and facilitates collaborative practice within the profession.

Element 7.2 Participates in interdisciplinary clinical decision making.

Cues

- Provides comprehensive and accurate feedback on infant cues and parent responses to the health care team.
- Actively seeks the parental perspective and encourages involvement.
- Clearly articulates the nursing care requirements using specific knowledge and experience.
- Makes recommendations related to nursing care.
- Facilitates collaborative activities to reach desired outcome.
- Establishes desired outcomes through coordinated teamwork.
- Provides an opportunity for discussion/feedback and affirms differing opinions.
- Communicates plans effectively to all team members.
- Employs strategies to promote self-esteem.
- Knows own abilities and requests assistance as required.
- Acknowledges requests and readily gives assistance to colleagues and peers.
- Takes advantage of learning opportunities to expand skills in the clinical area.

Standard 8: Provides a supportive environment for colleagues.

The neonatal nurse engenders confidence and trust in colleagues through demonstration of sensitivity to others. The nurse assumes responsibility for teaching and management functions, acting as a role model. Confidence in practice is evident in the actions of the nurse.

Element 8.1 Establishes positive relationships with colleagues.

Cues

- Respects the level of expertise of each nurse.
- Provides a rapid response where nursing colleagues require assistance.
- Promotes the well-being of colleagues and peers.

- Participates as an active member of the health care team.
- Is involved in the activities of the working unit.

Element 8.2 Acts to support staff in stressful situations.

Cues

- Develops an environment which facilitates the expression of feelings.
- Recommends and implements strategies to enhance coping mechanisms.
- Arranges or requests debriefing sessions as appropriate.
- Implements strategies to defuse a confronting situation.

Element 8.3 Encourages participation of colleagues in continuing education.

Cues

- Identifies areas for professional growth.
- Identifies opportunities to participate in continuing education.
- Provides assistance in meeting the learning needs of colleagues.
- Provides positive feedback for achievement.
- Facilitates the development of colleagues' practice.
- Provides guidance in clinical decision making to less experienced nurses.
- Optimises clinical teaching opportunities.
- Critically reflects to evaluate and develop practice.

Element 8.4 Acts as a positive role model for colleagues

Cues

- Models critical reflection on practice to enhance learning of self and others.
- Links explanations for nursing decisions to concepts.
- Demonstrates knowledge of infant outcomes that reflect best practice.
- Accepts responsibility for the orientation of new colleagues as part of the professional role.
- Performs nursing activities gently and calmly, with precision, dexterity and efficiency, using infant cues/ observations to guide care.
- Develops flexible and creative approaches in challenging situations.

Element 8.5 Assesses own and colleagues' learning needs related to the scope of practice.

Cues

- Uses an appropriate framework to assess learning needs of self and colleagues.
- Takes responsibility for personal learning needs, seeking guidance where needed.
- Initiates discussion with staff relative to identified learning needs.
- Identifies learning needs that arise from changing work practices, technology or legislation.
- Undertakes preparation to effectively fulfil preceptor or mentor roles.
- Initiates innovative teaching/learning strategies that enhance learning opportunities for self and colleagues.
- Facilitates access to learning resources for self and colleagues.
- Identifies performance strengths and areas for improvement.
- Provides opportunities to enable self and nursing colleagues to reflect on practice.
- Participates in performance management activities for colleagues and others.
- Adopts the role of adviser to colleagues and others.
- Implements strategies to ensure compliance with minimum standards.
- Creates opportunities to disseminate information.

Standard 9: Manages the use of staff and physical resources.

Context specific knowledge and skills enable the neonatal nurse to anticipate the effective use of clinical staff and physical resources.

Element 9.1 Contributes to the development and/or review of philosophies and clinical guidelines.

Cues

- Reviews existing guidelines and makes recommendations for change.
- Critically evaluates guidelines for nursing practice, and identifies gaps between practice and research.
- Develops and reviews frameworks that are informed from contemporary, context-specific literature.
- Uses research-based evidence to guide and inform changes in practice and to inform the development and/or review of frameworks.

Element 9.2 Uses physical resources to optimal effect.

Cues

- Demonstrates effective use of resources in clinical decision making.
- Demonstrates effective use of health resources.
- Makes a contribution to the evaluation of resources.
- Seeks expert advice regarding appropriate use of resources.

Element 9.3 Negotiates for optimal clinical resources to meet the needs of infants and families.

Cues

- Identifies and manages actual and potential alterations in the infant's care.
- Negotiates nursing levels and skill mix with management.
- Reports on the numbers of nurses required to deliver quality care and negotiates with management.
- Evaluates and modifies the model of care delivery to accommodate nursing levels.
- Identifies and explains expectations, responsibility and accountability.
- Uses opportunities to develop the clinical skills of less experienced colleagues.
- Supervises delegated nursing care.
- Provides assistance where required.

Standard 10: Engages in ethically justifiable nursing practice.

Reflection on experience enables the neonatal nurse to approach challenging ethical situations. The neonatal nurse initiates and guides ethical decision making with consistency, clarity and tolerance.

Element 10.1 Engages in ethical decision making.

Cues

- Identifies the elements of a moral dilemma.
- Uses a systematic approach to ethical decision making.
- Underpins decision making with an appropriate ethical framework.
- Makes decisions that are ethically defensible.
- Bases actions on ethical decisions.
- Complies with the profession's Code of Ethics.
- Justifies nursing actions with reference to the Code of Ethics.

Element 10.2 Engages in ethical debate.

Cues

- Promotes ethically defensible interventions.
- Debates contemporary ethical issues.
- Initiates discussion of situations involving ethical dilemma.
- Evaluates and gives consideration to opposing viewpoints on ethical issues.
- Achieves resolution of ethical dilemmas by mediation as necessary.

DOMAIN: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is the responsibility of all nursing professionals to maintain contemporary evidence-based practice, knowledge and skills.¹ The introduction of national registration has mandated a minimum requirement for continuing professional development (CPD) standards. The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia define CPD as “the means by which members of the profession maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the personal and professional qualities required throughout their professional lives.”²

CPD should be viewed as documented evidence that the neonatal nurse has a commitment to using evidence in practice and to maintaining professional standards.

Standard 11: Communication.

The knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that support effective professional practice and proficiency in procedural tasks are collectively called professional skill.³ The development of robust communication is one of the most important skills for the neonatal nurse to master. As such communication is the basis for professional performance and is essential for the provision of effective, safe and competent family centred care. Development of effective communication skills is an essential component in all neonatal speciality curricula.

References

1. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2009). Continuing Competence Framework for Nursing and Midwives. Available at www.anmc.org.au
2. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (2010). Continuing professional development registration standard. Available at www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au
3. Ustun B (2006). Communication skills training as a part of a problem-based learning curriculum. *Educational Innovation* 45:10, 421-424.

Element 11.1 The neonatal nurse has excellent communication skills and works within a collaborative framework to provide optimal care.

Cues

- Works within his or her scope of practice and seeks guidance and support as appropriate to ensure safe practice.
- Uses conflict resolution skills appropriately to promote teamwork and collaborative practice.

Element 11.2 The neonatal nurse establishes a professional yet nurturing relationship with families.

Cues

- Understands that empathy, effective listening and advanced interpersonal skills facilitate trust and confidence in the nursing team.
- Achieves implementation of individualised developmental care through a nurturing and sensitive approach with parents/family.
- Facilitates parental decision making to further develop parenting skills and self confidence.
- Demonstrates skills in bereavement counselling.

Element 11.3 The neonatal nurse delivers best practice through interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork.

Cues

- Achieves optimal management of infants and families through effective clinical handover and comprehensive documentation.
- Promotes teamwork by effective interdisciplinary communication and respect.
- Promotes appropriate use of evidence based procedures and guidelines for improved clinical outcomes and efficient use of health resources.
- Evaluates patient management using effective communication and listening skills.

Standard 12: Acts to enhance the professional development of self and others.

The neonatal nurse demonstrates commitment to ongoing professional development, using best available evidence, standards and guidelines to maintain best practice.

Element 12.1 Regularly engages in the process of self assessment and reflection.

Cues

- Defines practice in accordance with the current role statement.
- Uses an appropriate framework of standards as a benchmark for assessments.
- Assesses knowledge and skills realistically and displays insight.
- Seeks feedback from nursing peers when reflecting on clinical issues and performance.
- Obtains feedback by participation in performance management and review activities.

Element 12.2 Uses best available evidence, standards and guidelines to evaluate nursing performance.

Cues

- Critiques evidence from the process of self-assessment to identify trends in professional growth.
- Reflects on performance and acknowledges professional strengths and areas for improvement.
- Recognises the need to participate in professional activities to maintain and enhance practice.

Element 12.3 Has an ongoing commitment to professional development.

Cues

- Recognises the need for ongoing professional development.
- Takes responsibility for own learning strategies.
- Develops a plan for increasing own clinical skills.
- Discusses strategies to meet learning needs with appropriate personnel.
- Reviews progress toward career goals.
- Assesses achievements.
- Identifies changed circumstances and modifies plans as required.
- Records relevant CPD hours.
- Develops and maintains a professional clinical practice portfolio to provide supporting evidence.

Standard 13: Engages in activities to improve nursing practice.

The neonatal nurse uses reliable best evidence and meaningful knowledge as a basis for improving practice. The neonatal nurse adopts a creative and resourceful approach to practice development and uses a range of processes to contribute to nursing knowledge.

Element 13.1 Uses relevant theoretical frameworks to inform nursing practice.

Cues

- Bases practice on a sound nursing theoretical framework.
- Uses theoretical frameworks from relevant disciplines.
- Makes a contribution to nursing knowledge through reflection on practice.

Element 13.2 Engages in quality improvement processes.

Cues

- Supports quality improvement processes within the workplace.
- Provides feedback on quality improvement processes to colleagues.
- Consistently uses structured feedback from parents and consumer groups, both formal and informal, for ongoing quality improvement.
- Makes a contribution to quality improvement processes.
- Incorporates outcomes from quality improvement processes into nursing practice.

DOMAIN: RESEARCH

Research is the basis of best practice. Neonatal nurses need to understand the research process, take opportunities to be involved in research to enhance professional knowledge and contribute to nursing practice, and seek opportunities to update on current studies and findings. Research knowledge includes an understanding of the ethical principles for conducting research and the different research methods used, how to review the literature, the ability to critically analyse results and how to implement findings into practice.

Standard 14: Understands the importance of research in nursing practice.

Element 14.1 Practises within an evidence-based framework.

Cues for this element are reproduced and adapted from the *ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse (2006) Standard 3.1 through 3.4.*

- *Identifies the relevance of research to improve individual/group outcomes.*
- *Uses best available evidence, nursing expertise and respect for the values and beliefs of individuals/groups in the provision of nursing care.*
- *Demonstrates analytical skills in accessing and evaluating health information and research evidence.*
- *Supports and contributes to nursing and health care research.*

Element 14.2 The neonatal nurse is able to critically review research articles.

Cues

- Is competent in searching and critically appraising the relevant literature.
- Writes and uses evidence based guidelines.
- Understands that research must be conducted in an ethical manner.

Element 14.3 Uses research to inform practice.

Cues

- Critically evaluates research for its rigour or trustworthiness and relevance.
- Uses research to validate current nursing practice and integrate evidence into nursing practice.
- Disseminates research findings to colleagues.

Element 14.4 Contributes to the research process.

Cues

- Challenges or questions nursing practice as the basis for research.
- Works with an interdisciplinary research team.
- Validates current practice with research.
- Makes a contribution to the conduct of ethically approved research.
- Takes opportunities to support or participate in research.
- Encourages others to undertake research.

Element 14.5 Participates in activities related to the enhancement of neonatal nursing practice.

Cues

- Reads appropriate professional journals and uses current information to inform practice.
- Engages in the activities of a relevant professional organisation.
- Provides evidence of professional activities undertaken.
- Participates in the activities of the professional organisation at local, national or international levels.
- Publishes original work, reviews and commentaries as appropriate.

References

1. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008). *Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia*. Canberra: ANMC.
2. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008). *Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia*. Canberra: ANMC.

