



Scope of Practice

SURVEY RESULTS

THE College's Board of Directors has made Encouraging and supporting registered nurses to achieve the full scope of practice set out in legislation one of the College's Strategic Directions. RNs validated this priority in a member survey earlier this year where 97% of respondents agreed it was a priority area on which the College should focus.

In order to achieve this, we recognized the need to find a common understanding of the scope of practice of registered nurses. We approached this task by first engaging registered nurses in a dialogue about this issue and began this conversation with a survey that was available to all registered nurses in the province. Registered nurses were asked to read a document developed by staff at the College called Characteristics of Scope of Practice. This document has been viewed more than 500 times on the College's website. At the same time, we invited RNs to complete a short survey online providing feedback on the characteristics document. More than one hundred individuals completed the survey.

▼ SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

More than 90% of respondents agreed the characteristics document was clear and understandable. Several respondents stated they found the document was too broad or not specific enough. Many nurses were looking for concrete lists of tasks and specific examples although some nurses appreciated the more high level take on scope of practice. One nurse commented that she "enjoyed the approach of thinking through scope of practice based on knowledge and evidence as opposed to focusing on task lists."

Several nurses stated in one way or another that the characteristics of scope of practice did not apply directly to them or their practice; however, when asked directly most respondents (91.4%) agreed the document applied to their practice. We are encouraged by that response.

One interesting finding of this survey was that 67.3% of respondents said they believe they are currently practicing to their full scope of practice. In contrast, it is clearly an area of opportunity and challenge that more than one quarter (25.9%) said they were

not practicing to their full scope of practice.

Respondents identified several barriers that prevent them from practicing to their full scope of practice. The most common barriers identified were:

- time constraints and staffing shortages;
- a lack of resources or education;
- organizational policies, procedures and culture;
- other healthcare professionals and administration's lack of understanding about registered nurse scope of practice; and
- uncertainty about the nature of registered nurse scope of practice in particular settings.

Almost everyone (96.3%) agreed that patients would be the ultimate beneficiary if all health care providers practiced to their full scope of practice. Several nurses agreed that if all health care providers practiced to their full scope of practice patients would receive better, more timely care. As well, many respondents mentioned that practicing to full scope of practice would impact access issues and wait times in a positive way. Some respondents went a little further and pointed out that practicing to full scope of practice would also improve job satisfaction and would be a way to maintain and further develop skills and competencies.

Some additional suggestions and comments made by respondents included the sentiment that RNs need to dialogue about scope of practice throughout their careers. One nurse went on to say that being reminded about scope of practice is important because "often the workplace gets so busy that we do the tasks but often don't think of the big picture." As well, several respondents mentioned that education about scope of practice directed at all healthcare professionals needs to be a priority to facilitate better understanding and collaboration among teams.

The results of this survey indicate that a great deal of education and dialogue needs to take place not only among the public and other healthcare professionals but also among registered nurses themselves.

The College will continue to support the province wide conversation on scope of practice with an ongoing series of articles on scope. In addition, a new survey will go online in October. As the College's president, Kathy Doerksen visits worksites throughout the province and she has made scope of practice one of the topic areas she engages registered nurses in dialogue on. Clearly we can all agree, as the survey respondents wholeheartedly did, that Manitobans would be the ultimate beneficiary if all health care practitioners practiced to his or her full scope. This is a great challenge that can only be achieved if we work together. We invite you to join the College in this important task.