

## Position statement: Nursing, technology and telehealth, 2016

### Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to highlight the professional nursing issues raised by the rapidly evolving advances in electronic health records, telehealth and the use of technology in nursing practice.

### Background

Advances in the fields of informatics, communication and technology (ICT) have huge potential to improve integration and access to healthcare for all – including patients in remote areas of New Zealand where consultations with specialists can involve considerable travel, cost and inconvenience. New technology also allow timely and accurate communication with patients, facilitating care. Developments in electronic health records pave the way to greater sharing and coordination of care, and encrypted, protected sharing of results, scans, assessments and care plans that will improve patient care and make best use of scarce clinical resources.

Nurses, especially nurses working in the community, have a key role to play in realising these benefits.

### Definitions

Telehealth is defined as “Health care delivery, or closely related processes, when participants are separated by distance, and information and communications technologies and infrastructures are used to overcome that distance”<sup>1</sup>

The functional domains covered include telephone triage, interactive disease management monitoring (for example sharing of wound care progress via digital images or oversight of devices capable of transmitting data such as blood sugar), and delivery of health information and education.<sup>2</sup>

The Nurse Executives of New Zealand has developed a position statement on telehealth<sup>3</sup>. This statement helpfully outlines the key considerations relating to the use of telehealth by nursing, and also

provides advice to nurses on how to manage those. The NZNO endorses the useful and practical guidance it provides

Additional practical guidance on those topics that may be of a particular concern to nurses, includes advice that:

- > The care nurses provide to a patient in another location should, so far as is possible, meet the same standards as care provided in-person.
- > Nurses are responsible for the evaluation of information used to inform their decision-making.
- > If technology is unable to provide the information necessary for the provision of appropriate nursing care, then the nurse should either obtain that information by another means (for example, by arranging a physical examination) – or make alternate arrangements for care (for example, by referring the patient to another provider).
- > Institutions which implement telehealth nursing services should have in place:
  - policy and procedure including appropriate role/job descriptions
  - regular training, performance monitoring, competency assessment, and quality improvement activities
  - written protocols or guidelines to guide telehealth nursing practice, which are regularly reviewed and revised by appropriate stakeholders.

Given the particular legal issues associated with prescribing, additional guidance for nurse prescribers and nurse practitioners may be found in the Medical Council's *Statement on Telehealth* <sup>4</sup>.

### **Public Protection Guiding Principles for Inter-Country Practice:**

This briefing statement does not address the **regulatory concerns** relating to clinicians based outside New Zealand being involved in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment or monitoring of New Zealand patients, though we advocate for appropriate oversight and

consideration of this increasingly prevalent practise. Current examples include outsourcing of specialist triage health lines to Australian paediatric nurses and the assessment and reporting by overseas consultants of biochemical, cellular or radiological investigations. However, additional advice for nurses working remotely across national boundaries can be found in the Position Statement on Practice Location and Inter-Country Nursing Practice by the International Nurses Regulator Collaborative<sup>5</sup>. The principles are listed below.

- > A nurse must be currently licensed/registered in the country where the patient is located unless practicing under a mutual recognition licensure/registration agreement between countries.
- > A nurse must practice in accordance with the nurse practice laws of the country where the patient is located.
- > When practicing between countries, nurses have a responsibility to identify themselves to patients by name, license type, number, and country of licensure/registration.

## **Strategy**

An E-Nursing strategy is required to integrate the physical/practical, educational and regulatory changes that will be required to realise the potential benefits of telehealth and technology outlined in the 2016 Health Strategy. In particular, the nursing profession must continue to engage at all levels with those charged with designing and implementing health informatics in New Zealand (National Health IT Board), and NHITB must ensure that what is developed meets the *clinical* needs of health and nursing workforces, not vice versa.

### **To meet this aim:**

- > NZNO advocates for secure, shared electronic patient records capable of representing the clinical practice of registered nurses across all fields and settings, designed to enable the recording of clinical data that will facilitate safe coordination of care and robustly capture nursing practice and patient outcomes.
- > NZNO asserts that funders and planners must deliver the appropriate investment in technology, training, ongoing ICT support and change

management required in the short term to realise the service improvements and reorganisations that may enable cost containment in the longer term.

- >NZNO will work with nursing regulatory and professional bodies to provide leadership and support to ensure nurse education to enable safe use of new technologies and development of guidelines to ensure that nursing interventions continue to be informed by nursing values, albeit within changing methods and models of care.
- >NZNO will regularly review national and international guidelines and professional nursing advice to keep pace with developments in the fields of ICT and Telehealth.

## Resources

1. The NZ Telehealth Forum “What is Telehealth”  
<http://www.telehealth.co.nz/what-is-telehealth>
2. NH Board of Nursing Position Statement and Clinical Practice Advisories Regarding the Role of the RN and LPN in Telehealth Nursing  
<https://www.nh.gov/nursing/statements-advisories/documents/telehealth.pdf>
3. Nurse Executives of New Zealand (2015) position statement on TeleHealth  
[http://www.telehealth.co.nz/images/telehealth/guidance/1505\\_nurse\\_executives\\_NZ\\_telehealth.pdf](http://www.telehealth.co.nz/images/telehealth/guidance/1505_nurse_executives_NZ_telehealth.pdf)
4. The Medical Council’s *Statement on telehealth* (2016)  
<https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/News-and-Publications/Consultations/Medical-Council-reviewing-its-Statement-on-Telehealth.pdf>
5. Position Statement on Practice Location and Inter-Country Nursing Practice by the International Nurses Regulator Collaborative (2016)  
<http://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/inrc-practice-location-position-statement.pdf>

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**Mission statement**

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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