

## Q & A for RN Clinical Protocols October 2015

The information for this Q & A is taken from the SRNA document, [Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)](#).

**1. What is a RN Clinical Protocol?**

A RN Clinical Protocol outlines a series of registered nursing activities that are implemented in pre-determined situations to provide highly specialized client care. It provides the authority for a RN who has obtained the competencies and proficiency to implement highly specialized care either independently with or without a client-specific order. It provides greater detail and direction than a guideline.

**2. What is the purpose of a RN Clinical Protocol?**

The purpose of a RN Clinical Protocol is to allow RNs to work collaboratively with physicians on an agreed upon practice for the clinical management of a client care situation where overlapping scopes of practice exist. RN Clinical Protocols contribute to timely, quality and efficient client care, and provide a standardized process for the safe implementation of client care.

**3. When would I use a RN Clinical Protocol?**

A RN Clinical Protocol would be used:

- without a client-specific order in an Emergency Health Situation or in an established Health/Service Program; or
- with a client-specific order for an Advanced RN Intervention.

**4. What client care situations can be managed for a Health Condition in an Emergency?**

This situation occurs when a RN determines that a client's health condition warrants an immediate intervention to prevent serious health deterioration and/or complications and a physician is not immediately available to provide client-specific orders.

Examples of health conditions managed in an emergency include, but are not limited to: the management of anaphylaxis, hypoglycemia, postpartum hemorrhage and providing defibrillation for a cardiac arrhythmia.

A RN Clinical Protocol for this situation must meet specific criteria as outlined on p. 14-15, [Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)](#).

**5. What is a RN's role in a Health/Service Program?**

A RN Clinical Protocol is required when a RN in a defined clinical role provides care independently, without a client-specific order for individuals who are in an established Health Service/Program. The RN could assist a primary care provider to:

- manage a client's diagnosed disease or disorder (e.g. insulin adjustment for gestational diabetes).
- identify any diseases or disorders with unrecognized or pre-symptomatic signs or symptoms in a client (e.g. colorectal cancer screening program).
- implement an Advanced RN Intervention to deliver client care for the purpose of disease prevention, health promotion, health maintenance, and/or rehabilitation (e.g. pap smear for health maintenance).

A RN in this role may include, but is not limited to: RN navigators for cancer screening programs (e.g. prostate, breast, colorectal); diabetes RN educator; sexual assault RN examiners; RN enterostomal therapists; and employee health RNs.

RN Clinical Protocols in these situations must meet specific criteria as outlined on p. 15-17, [\*Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)\*](#).

**6. What is an Advanced RN Intervention?**

This activity is complex in its knowledge requirement and application, may require the performance of complex technical skills or minor invasive actions, and could have an increased potential for the occurrence of an unintentional outcome that must be managed appropriately and safely. A RN Clinical Protocol is required for an Advanced RN Intervention that could pose a high risk of harm to a client if it is not carried out safely and competently.

The RN Clinical Protocols in this area must meet specific criteria as outlined on p. 17, [\*Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)\*](#).

**7. What criteria are required for a RN Clinical Protocol?**

A RN Clinical Protocol contains specific information and is outlined in a specific format. See p. 13 and Appendix D, p. 38, [\*Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)\*](#).

**8. How are RNs competent to provide client care outlined in RN Clinical Protocols?**

The knowledge, skill and judgement to safely and competently provide client care outlined in a RN Clinical Protocol is obtained from specialized education that is offered in many ways (e.g. courses, workshops, in-services). The education must be current, evidence-informed, and provided by an appropriate expert. For example, to provide defibrillation for the appropriate cardiac arrhythmia, a RN must first obtain specialized education for the following competencies: to interpret normal cardiac and arrhythmias on a monitor; manage the hazards of defibrillation; recognize and respond to the signs and symptoms of cardiac arrest, etc.

**9. How are RN Clinical Protocols approved?**

RN Clinical Protocols must be approved by the employer and are agreed to by the appropriate medical and nursing authority within an organization. Specific criteria must be met before a RN Clinical Protocol can be developed. This information is found on p. 17-20, [\*Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)\*](#).

**10. How do I know if an activity requires a RN Clinical Protocol?**

Appendix F, p. 41-42 in the [Standards for RN Specialty Practices \(2015\)](#) provides an assessment tool that can be used to determine if a RN Clinical Protocol is required.

**11. Who do I contact at the SRNA if I have questions about RN Specialty Practices?**

Please consult a SRNA Nursing Practice Advisor at [practiceadvice@srna.org](mailto:practiceadvice@srna.org).

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