

KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING
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ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT

ROLE OF THE ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSE IN THE PRESCRIBING OF MEDICATIONS TO SELF AND/OR FAMILY

REQUEST FOR OPINION

Numerous inquiries have been received by the Board office requesting an opinion of the Board regarding the role and scope of practice of the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse in prescribing medications for themselves or family members.

INTRODUCTION

The Kentucky Board of Nursing is authorized by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 314 to regulate nurses, nursing education and practice, and to issue advisory opinions on nursing practice, in order to assure that safe and effective nursing care is provided by nurses to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF NURSES

The Kentucky Nursing Laws (KRS Chapter 314) -- KRS 314.021(2) holds nurses individually responsible and accountable for rendering safe, effective nursing care to clients and for judgments exercised and actions taken in the course of providing care.

KRS 314.021(2) imposes individual responsibility upon nurses. Acts which are within the permissible scope of practice for a given licensure level may be performed only by those licensees who personally possess the education and skill proficiency to perform those acts in a safe, effective manner.

Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidence based.

Applicable Statutes¹

KRS 314.021(2) states:

All individuals licensed under provisions of this chapter shall be responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and experience in nursing and shall practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety.

¹ A copy of the *KENTUCKY NURSING LAWS* may be purchased from the Kentucky Board of Nursing office, or downloaded from the Board's web site at <http://kbn.ky.gov>

KRS 314.011(8) defines "advanced practice registered nursing practice" as:

...The performance of additional acts by registered nurses who have gained added knowledge and skills through an organized postbasic program of study and clinical experience and who are certified by the American Nurses' Association or other nationally established organizations or agencies recognized by the board to certify registered nurses for advanced nursing practice. The additional acts shall, subject to approval of the board, include but not be limited to prescribing treatment, drugs, devices, and ordering diagnostic tests. Advanced practice registered nurses who engage in these additional acts shall be authorized to issue prescriptions for and dispense nonscheduled legend drugs as defined in KRS 217.905 and to issue prescriptions for but not to dispense Schedules II through V controlled substances as classified in KRS 218A... The performance of these additional acts shall be consistent with the certifying organization or agencies' scopes and standards of practice recognized by the board by administrative regulation.

This Advisory Opinion Statement was developed to assist the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) in decision-making when prescribing for themselves or for non-patients including immediate family. APRNs often find themselves in situations where they may feel compelled to provide medical aspects of care or prescribe medications for themselves, their family members, or other individuals with whom they have a close personal relationship. A personal, non-professional relationship may potentially risk the APRN's ability to provide good quality care by preventing the recipient of the treatment from developing a good relationship with his or her own healthcare provider. Similarly, it can be difficult for the APRN to maintain clinical objectivity when providing medical care for himself or herself, or the person who they may have a personal or emotional relationship.

DEFINITIONS

- Immediate Family Member - means an APRN's spouse or partner, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild; or a parent, child, sibling, grandparent or grandchild of the APRN's spouse or partner; or another individual in relation to whom the APRN has a personal relationship that may render the APRN unable to exercise objective professional judgment in treatment decisions.
- Treating or Treatment - includes ordering and performing tests, making and communicating a diagnosis, and prescribing medications.
- Minor Condition - is a non-urgent, non-serious condition that requires short-term care of a routine nature. The condition is not likely to lead to a more serious condition and does not require on-going monitoring.
- Emergency - a manifestation where an individual is suffering or is at risk of sustaining serious bodily harm if medical intervention is not provided promptly.

ADVISORY OPINION

Legend or Non-Scheduled Pharmaceuticals, Diagnostics and Therapies:

It is the advisory opinion of the Kentucky Board of Nursing that APRNs, with prescriptive authority, not treat themselves, family members, or other persons in a personal relationship except:

- For a minor condition or an emergency situation and only when another qualified healthcare professional is not readily available.
- If an APRN or family member is enrolled as a patient at the APRN's practice setting.

When an APRN does provide care to family members or to other persons within a personal relationship, the APRN should ensure that the person advises his or her healthcare provider of the treatment received.

Controlled Substances:

Accepted and prevailing standards of care presuppose a professional relationship between a patient and practitioner when the practitioner is utilizing controlled substances. By definition, a practitioner may never have such a relationship with himself or herself. It is the advisory opinion that an APRN should not self-prescribe nor self-administer controlled substances.

Accepted and prevailing standards of care require that a practitioner maintain detached professional judgment when utilizing controlled substances in the treatment of family members. An APRN should only utilize controlled substances when treating a family member in an emergency situation which should be further documented in the patient's record by their healthcare provider.

Determining Scope of Practice:

Advisory opinion statements are issued by the Kentucky Board of Nursing as guidelines to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice. As such, an opinion statement is not a regulation of the Board and does not have the force and effect of law.

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