

What is Nursing?



COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF ONTARIO
ORDRE DES INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ONTARIO

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

Introduction

The goal of nursing is to restore, maintain and advance the health of individuals, groups or entire communities. It is a science and an art. The science is the application of nursing knowledge and the technical aspects of practice. The art is the establishment of a caring relationship through which nurses apply nursing knowledge, skills and judgment in a compassionate manner. Both focus on the whole person, not just a particular health problem.

Nurses have many different roles – clinical practitioner, administrator, teacher, researcher – in many different settings, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, clients' homes, clinics, industries and classrooms, to name just a few. They care for individuals at all stages of the life cycle and in all states of health, from normal functioning to crisis.

RNs and RPNs

In Ontario, nursing is one profession with two categories—Registered Nurse (RN) and Registered Practical Nurse (RPN).

Nurses are accountable for their decisions and actions, and for maintaining competence throughout their careers. Although all nursing students learn from the same body of nursing knowledge, RNs study for a longer period of time, allowing for greater depth and breadth of foundational knowledge in the areas of clinical practice, decision-making, critical thinking, leadership, research utilization and resource management. RPNs study for a shorter period of time, resulting in a more focused body of foundational knowledge in the areas identified above.

What Do Nurses Need to Know?

Nurse educators use the College's standards and entry-to-practice competencies when designing programs. Doing so helps ensure that applicants

will meet the College's entry-to-practice requirements. Comprehensive scientific knowledge is one component of a nurse's basic education, but there are others. These include: how to apply nursing knowledge in various situations and practice settings; how to deal effectively and in a caring manner with the public; how to behave professionally and ethically; and how to assure continued competence in nursing.

To maintain competence and ensure public safety, nurses pursue lifelong learning as part of the College's Quality Assurance Program. Continued learning can be achieved by reading professional journals, attending courses and conferences, or pursuing specialized education. Because of today's rapidly changing healthcare environment, nurses must possess current knowledge and skills, and exercise good judgement, in order to provide quality care to clients.

What is the College of Nurses of Ontario?

The College regulates the nursing profession in Ontario. Established by, but at arm's length from, the provincial government, the College sets the criteria for becoming a nurse in Ontario and the standards of practice that must be met to maintain that designation. Title protection is also within the jurisdiction of the College. Only those with a valid Certificate of Registration from the College can practise as a nurse in Ontario and use the titles "nurse", "Registered Nurse" or "Registered Practical Nurse."

In Ontario, the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA) and the *Nursing Act, 1991*, provide the legal framework for nursing as a self-regulating profession and give the College the responsibility for carrying out nursing regulation to protect the public interest.

The College has approximately 140,000 members, making nurses the largest group of regulated health care professionals in the province.

For More Information

Visit the College website at www.cno.org for more information on nursing education. The site also contains information on how to register with the College, downloadable versions of practice standards and guidelines, notices about upcoming Council meetings, and resources such as e-Learning modules and the *One is One Too Many* abuse prevention video.