

Complementary and Alternative Modalities and Nursing Practice

Statement of Purpose

To establish guidelines and provide clear direction for Oregon licensed nurses who want to practice using complementary or alternative modalities.

Background Information

There are a number of therapeutic modalities that are intended to improve the health and well-being of clients. These modalities are those which licensed nurses may employ to increase comfort or relaxation, maintain, improve or restore health and harmony of the body, mind, and/or spirit, improve coping mechanisms, reduce stress, relieve pain and/or increase the client's sense of well being. They are used either in addition to or in place of conventional treatments. Many of these therapeutic modalities are not regulated by the State of Oregon and, while scientific evidence exists regarding some modalities, it is limited to date.

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) states that complementary modalities are those used together with conventional medicine and alternative therapies those used in place of conventional medicine. NCCAM says that Integrative Care combines complementary and alternative approaches with conventional medicine. In addition, they divide the modalities into four domains, plus establish a category for whole medical systems, which crosses all domains. These domains are:

- Manipulative and Body-based Practices
- Mind-body Medicine
- Biologically-based Practices
- Energy Medicine
- Whole Medical Systems

Specific modalities are listed on both the NCCAM website as well as the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA) website.

The licensed nurse must be able to determine whether or not a particular modality is within his/her scope of practice and whether or not to incorporate it into practice. The licensed nurse is always expected to be familiar with and adhere to nursing scope and standards of practice as found in the Nurse Practice Act. At times, modalities cross the boundaries of other scopes of practice. When that is the case, confusion and potential liability for the practitioner may exist for practicing outside the scope of practice afforded by current licensure or for practicing without licensure by another health licensing entity. This document will assist the licensed nurse in making determinations regarding these issues.

Scope of Practice Statement

The Oregon State Board of Nursing affirms that it is within the scope of practice for the Registered Nurse (RN) and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to provide complementary and alternative modalities for a client provided the following conditions are met. The LPN carries out these activities only under the direction of the RN or other licensed health care provider who has authority to make changes in the plan of care. The RN/LPN must:

1. Function within the scope of practice standards set for his/her licensure category.
2. Perform a nursing assessment (RN may perform comprehensive or focused assessments and LPNs may perform focused assessments), make a nursing diagnostic statement (LPNs may select diagnostic statements from available resources), and develop a nursing plan of care (The LPN may contribute to care plan development and develop focused plans of care). Both RNs and LPNs are responsible for documentation.
3. Support the client to become an informed consumer. (See below)

4. Obtain the client's permission to utilize the specific modality.
5. Have documented knowledge, judgment, skill and competency in the application of the modality.
6. May provide information for non-prescriptive remedies (such as vitamins, minerals, homeopathic, herbal, compound medications, or over-the-counter drugs) as long as the concepts delineated in "Supporting the Client to Become an Informed Consumer," listed below, are followed.
7. Obtain additional licensure /certification when needed (recommended or required for alternative modalities and some complementary modalities).
8. When employing the use of any modality which is regulated by any other State of Oregon health related Agency, Board or Commission, the licensed nurse must adhere to those statutes and rules pertaining to the modality.

The Oregon State Board of Nursing affirms that it is within the scope of practice of the Nurse Practitioner (NP) and Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) to provide complementary and alternative modalities for a client provided the following conditions are met: The NP/CNS must:

1. Always function within the scope of practice standards set for his/her licensure category and specialty area of practice.
2. Perform an assessment consistent with an existing or new diagnosis, and document a treatment plan.
3. Support the client to become an informed consumer. (See below)
4. Obtain the client's permission to utilize the specific modality.
5. Have documented knowledge, judgment, skill and competency in the application of the modality.
6. If the NP or CNS has prescriptive authority, practice consistent with the Oregon State Board of Nursing Policy entitled, *Nurse Practitioners and Clinical Nurse Specialists with Prescriptive Authority and Non-Prescriptive Remedies* must be followed.
7. Obtain additional licensure /certification when needed (recommended or required for alternative modalities and some complementary modalities).
8. When employing the use of any modality which is regulated by any other State of Oregon health related Agency, Board or Commission, adhere to those statutes and rules pertaining to the modality.

In addition to the above criteria, when a RN or LPN (under the clinical direction of a RN or other health care professional who has authority to make changes in the plan of care) independently (within that licensed nurse's scope of practice) practices as a provider of a modality, he/she must have written consent. He/she shall also disclose to the client:

1. The nurse's status as a licensed nurse.
2. The educational preparation, experiences and credentials as a therapist/practitioner of the modality.
3. Whether the particular modality is regulated by a state regulatory agency and whether uniform educational standards or requirements have been adopted by that agency.
4. Services are not meant to replace medical care or psychotherapy.

When a licensed nurse, functioning within an organized health system, elects to utilize a modality to augment his/her practice, the therapy must be approved by and be consistent with the organization's policies and procedures. The therapy must also be consistent with the mutually established client goals and the overall treatment plan.

Knowledge, Skills and Competency

The licensed nurse must acquire, document and maintain current knowledge, skills and competency in the modalities that will be practiced.

The licensed nurse has an accountability to practice complementary or alternative-modalities or integrative care in accord with the generally accepted standards of that modality as well as the

accepted standards of nursing practice. The nurse must at all times adhere to the statutes and regulations of the particular therapy.

NPs and CNSs with prescriptive authority for whom the recommendation of non-prescriptive remedies (such as vitamins, minerals, homeopathic, herbal, compound medications, or over-the-counter drugs) constitutes a significant proportion of therapeutic practice should dedicate continuing education hours to reflect these practices. These hours may constitute part of the overall continuing education hours required for NPs and CNSs, but are **in addition to** the hours required in pharmacology for prescriptive medications.

Supporting the Client to Become an Informed Consumer

The client is the primary health care decision maker and may choose to whom, under what circumstances, and for what purpose he/she seeks health care. A licensed nurse, while providing care to a client, may be asked by the client, or discover inadvertently, that the client is either seeking to utilize, or currently utilizing, over-the-counter products or alternative/complementary therapies to supplement or to replace prescriptive medications, treatments and/or therapies. In this instance, the licensed nurse would encourage the client to inform their primary health care provider of the client's actions or intended actions, and encourage the client to acquire accurate information about the over-the-counter products such as:

1. Possible consequences of discontinuing the prescription medication(s).
2. Description and components of the therapy.
3. Safety factors/issues related to the therapy.
4. Potential goals/benefits of the therapy.
5. The potential for the therapy to interact in a non-therapeutic way with the treatment regime established by the primary health care provider.
6. Expected frequency of therapy over what course of time.
7. Expected course of therapy and its total cost.
8. Third party reimbursement.

The licensed nurse would educate the consumer that the health care decision-making begins with the client obtaining a complete medical evaluation including current health practices in order to: Develop a therapeutic treatment plan which enhances the client's health promotion and maintenance; reduces opportunity for untoward side effects or contraindications; and safeguard the client's health.

Definitions

1. **"Alternative Modalities."** A diverse group of therapies and practices used **in place of** conventional medicine for the purpose of increasing comfort or relaxation, maintaining, improving or restoring health and harmony of the body, mind, and/or spirit, improving coping mechanisms, reducing stress, relieving pain and/or increasing the client's sense of well being.
2. **"Client."** A person who is a consumer of health care services.
3. **"Complementary Modalities."** A diverse group of therapies and practices used **together with** conventional medicine for the purpose of increasing comfort or relaxation, maintaining, improving or restoring health and harmony of the body, mind, and/or spirit, improving coping mechanisms, reducing stress, relieving pain and/or increasing the client's sense of well being.
4. **"Integrative Care."** The combination of **both complementary modalities and alternative** approaches with conventional medicine. Integrative care includes multiple modalities in the overall patient-centered plan of care.
5. **"Licensed Independent Practitioner."** An individual permitted by Oregon law to independently make a medical diagnosis, provide care, treatment and services that are within the individual's scope of practice.

6. **“Licensed Nurse.”** All RNs and LPNs licensed under ORS 678. In this document, licensed nurse may also apply to the NP and CNS.
7. **“Nursing Diagnostic Statements.”** The nursing diagnoses or reasoned conclusions which are developed as a result of nursing assessment. They describe a client’s actual or potential health problems which are amendable to resolution by means of nursing strategies, interventions or actions.

Questions and Answers

1. **Q:** Which modalities require separate licensure by the State of Oregon?
A: Acupuncture, Massage Therapy, Chiropractic Medicine, Osteopathic Medicine, Naturopathic Medicine, Physical Therapy are all regulated by other health care licensing Boards in Oregon. In addition, there may be other modalities which contain elements that fall within the domain of health care licensing Boards. For example, if a modality included psychotherapy, it would not fall within the scope of the RN or LPN and it would only be appropriate if it fell within the specialty area of practice of the NP or CNS. Otherwise, a licensed nurse would have to have dual licensure in another health field, such as clinical social work or psychology, which would enable the nurse to conduct psychotherapy.
2. **Q:** At times, there is overlap between licensed nursing practice and massage. How does a licensed nurse figure out when he/she needs a separate massage license?
A: The Oregon Board of Massage Therapists requires licensure for massage therapy, and limits individual practitioners from using the term “massage” in the business name unless the individual is a Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT). Practically speaking, this means that the licensed nurse should not set up an independent business, advertise for and perform only massage unless also a LMT. However, if massage is conducted as an **element of practice** within a broader documented nursing plan of care this may be within the licensed nurses’ scope of practice.
3. **Q:** Can a nurse’s advertisement for a complementary modality include the word “massage”?
A: The word “massage” may not be used in the business name unless the licensed nurse is also a LMT. The licensed nurse may not advertise that he/she performs massage, but may use the word “massage” to describe an **element of practice or a technique** which would be used in a broader documented nursing plan of care. For example, an appropriate nursing intervention may include massage of an acupressure point. The licensed nurse may choose to refer to “massage” in this limited context in an advertising brochure.
4. **Q:** Can a licensed nurse independently practice as a provider of complementary or alternative modalities or integrative care?
A: This is appropriate for the RN, NP or CNS as long as he/she is working within scope of practice set by licensure category, and given that knowledge, skills and competency are established and documented. The LPN’s practice is a directed practice, which means that if he/she were to engage in complementary or alternative modalities or integrative care, that practice would need to be accomplished under the direction of another licensed provider who has authority to make changes in the plan of care. In addition, the nurse shall also disclose to the client:
 1. The nurse’s status as a licensed nurse.
 2. The educational preparation, experiences and credentials as a therapist/practitioner of the modality.
 3. Whether the particular modality is regulated by a state regulatory agency and whether uniform educational standards or requirements have been adopted by that agency.
 4. Services are not meant to replace medical care or psychotherapy.

5. **Q:** How can I best achieve and be able to demonstrate current knowledge, skills and competency?
- A:** Due to the wide variety of modalities, it is difficult to list one way to achieve and demonstrate competency in a modality. As with other areas of practice, you must understand the theoretical underpinnings of the modality, the practical application/s, possible risks, side effects, etc. and be able to manage the consequences of your actions. Client safety must always be a paramount concern. Some of the modalities require formal education and licensure; others require formal course work and certifying examinations. Other modalities may be presented less formally (e.g. through a conference), but still require an examination. Documentation means that you have to be able to demonstrate on paper how you have achieved the given competency. It does not mean that the practitioner necessarily must be certified, but it does mean that if there were a question about competency, the nurse (all levels of licensure) would be able to demonstrate on paper how he/she had become competent. This could be from coursework or it could be from documented training and mentorship, or a combination.

References

American Holistic Nurses Association (2008). *Position on the Role of Nurses in the Practice of Complementary and Alternative Therapies*. Retrieved December 17, 2008, from <http://www.ahna.org/Resources/Publications/PositionStatements/tabid/1926/Default.aspx>

Kentucky Board of Nursing (2007). *Role of Nurses in Businesses Offering Complementary/Alternative or Holistic Practices*. Retrieved December 17, 2008, from <http://www.kbn.ky.gov/practice/holistic.htm>

Libster, Martha M. (Fall 2008). Nursing in the Garden Laboratory and Kitchen Clinic. *Beginnings, Fall 2008*, 4-7.

Maryland Board of Nursing (1999). *Complementary/Alternative/Holistic/Integrated Therapies*. Retrieved December 17, 2008, from <http://www.mbon.org/main.php?v=norm&p=0&c=practice/therapies.html>

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (2008). *What is CAM?*. Retrieved December 17, 2008, from <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whaticam>

Additional Resources

American Holistic Nurses Association, American Nurses Association. (2007). *Holistic Nursing*. Silver Spring: Nursesbooks.org.

http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/topics/22_reviews.html

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The Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) is authorized by Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 678 to exercise general supervision over the practice of nursing in Oregon to include regulation of nursing licensure, education and practice in order to assure that the citizens of Oregon receive safe and effective care.

The OSBN further interprets statute and rule and issues opinions in the form of Board Policies, Policy Guidelines and Position Statements. Although they do not have the force and effect of law, these opinions are advisory in nature and issued as guidelines for safe nursing practice.