Position Statement

The Role of Unlicensed Assistive Personnel in Dialysis Therapy

The American Nephrology Nurses’ Association (ANNA) supports the collaborative role of registered nurses (RNs) with members of the multidisciplinary team in the provision of care to individuals undergoing dialysis therapy for either acute or chronic renal failure. While economic and efficiency concerns may prompt providers to utilize unlicensed assistive personnel, ANNA believes that the overall accountability and responsibility for nursing care rendered to patients and the coordination of patient care activities, including the provision of dialysis-related assessments and many specific interventions, are best accomplished by registered nurses who have experience in the specialty of nephrology nursing and who by basic nursing education and state practice are designated to provide this function. Each state board of nursing outlines what procedures an RN can delegate.

It is the position of ANNA that:

- Licensure of Assistive personnel must comply with the regulations of the state in which they are employed, as well as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Interpretive Guidelines.
- Unlicensed assistive personnel must function under the state’s nurse practice act; ANNA prefers specific language referring to unlicensed assistive personnel in dialysis settings.
- Unlicensed assistive personnel must complete a standard program of education and training for unlicensed assistive personnel in dialysis, with continuing educational requirements after the completion of the education program.
- Unlicensed personnel in dialysis must be certified per CMS Interpretive Guidelines 494.140(e).

Background and Rationale

ANNA recognizes that unlicensed assistive personnel can make significant contributions in the delivery of dialysis care. Unlicensed assistive personnel in dialysis are individuals who are trained to function in an assistive role to nephrology nurses in the provision of patient-care activities as delegated by RNs. In the dialysis setting, the classification of unlicensed assistive personnel includes, but is not limited to, dialysis technicians, patient care technicians, reuse technicians, and nephrology technologists. When such personnel participate in the delivery of dialysis-related patient care, they must do so under the direct supervision of RNs, based on the RN’s assessment of the patient’s condition and care needs, and in recognition of the unlicensed individual’s clinical competencies and skills.

ANNA further believes that additional research is needed to determine the appropriate skill mix of personnel and staffing patterns. Additional research is warranted to describe the dialysis care delivery systems and approaches that assure optimal outcomes and cost-effectiveness for individuals undergoing dialysis therapy.

References

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*Adopted by the ANNA Board of Directors in September 1996*
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