

**Te Waipounamu
Registered Nurse
Prescribing in
Community Health
(RNPCH).**

Programme Guidelines

Outline of nurse prescribing

Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ) is the regulatory authority for the registration of nurses, this role/ responsibility is outlined in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (HPCA, 2003). The Medicines (Designated Prescriber-Registered Nurses) Regulations 2016 allows suitably qualified registered nurses (RNs) to prescribe medications specified by the Director-General of Health under the Medicines Act 1981.

There are three levels of prescribing authority for nurses in NZ, each level has its own regulations and educational requirements:

- **Designated registered nurse (RN) prescribers in community health-** Preparation for this level of prescribing is via a work-based education programme. When approved by NCNZ, community RN prescribers can prescribe from the medicine list for RN prescribing in community health. This medication list includes medicines for minor ailments and illnesses in normally healthy people without significant comorbidities (NCNZ, 2023). The health conditions for this type of prescribing include common skin conditions such as simple eczema, impetigo, fungal infections and parasites, common aches and pains, ear infections, sore throats and rheumatic fever prophylaxis and ongoing treatment, common forms of contraception and the treatment of common sexually transmitted infections, urinary tract infections and constipation (NCNZ, 2023).
- **Designated registered nurse (RN) prescribers in primary health and specialty teams-** Preparation for this level of prescribing is via a post graduate diploma. When approved by NCNZ these RN prescribers can prescribe from the Medicine list for RN prescribing in primary health and specialty teams (NCNZ, 2023).
- **Nurse practitioners (NPs) have a distinct scope of practice on the NCNZ register.** NPs are authorised prescribers who may prescribe within their scope and are not limited to a medication list.

This document relates to RN prescribing in community health only and will be referred to as RNPCH. This document provides an outline of the Te Waipounamu work-based education programme. This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents published by NCNZ and available on the [NCNZ web site](#).

- Medicines list for RNs prescribing in community health (June 2023) Guidelines for RN prescribing in community health (June 2023)
- Principles for quality and safe prescribing practice (Sept 2024)

The RNPCH Programme

This work-based education programme was approved for delivery by NCNZ early in 2022. Since this time several PHOs and primary/community health care providers have partnered with WellSouth providing collaborative governance. This programme is now available to community nurses throughout Te Waipounamu. There is no charge to RN's enrolling in this programme.

Entry Criteria:

- A minimum of 3 years Full time equivalent clinical experience as a RN with at least one year in the area the nurse intends prescribing.
- A current annual practising certificate.
- Current employee appraisal
- Manager approval, attesting to the competence and conduct of the nurse along with commitment to support the nurse throughout the programme and on completion of the programme.
- PHO/ HNZ Director Of Nursing/ Organisational Nurse Lead approval. Enrolment will be limited to one RN in a workplace each cohort. There may be exceptions to this rule in large practices/workplaces where more supervisors are available.
- Support of an authorised prescriber (doctor or NP) as clinical supervisor.

Clinical supervisor responsibilities

All RNs enrolling in the RNPCH programme must have the support of an authorised prescriber (NP or doctor) with whom they have access to on a daily basis to collaborate with on clinical cases. On enrolment a formal learning contract, clearly outlining responsibilities, will be agreed between the Clinical Supervisor and RN.

- The clinical supervisor will spend a minimum of 4-8 hours a fortnight working alongside the RN and:
 - Understand the requirements of the Registered Nurse Prescribing in Community Health programme. This includes reading the following NCNZ documents:
 - Medicines list for RNs prescribing in community health (June 2023)
 - Guidelines for RN prescribing in community health (June 2023)
 - Principles for quality and safe prescribing practice (Sept 2024)
 - Regularly sit in on the RN's patient consultations with patients, providing feedback and guidance on assessment and potential prescribing decisions.
 - Share and role model prescribing practice through regular discussion of clinical cases.
 - Attend fortnightly clinical supervision meetings, to provide feedback and reflection.
 - Facilitate learning experiences for the RN through knowledge sharing and shared consultations.
 - Arrange for a colleague (NP/ Dr or Senior Nurse) to support the RN if unavailable.
 - Verify the RNs portfolio at the end of the programme.
 - On completion of the programme complete an assessment against the Competencies for RN prescribing in community health as part of portfolio submission (NCNZ, 2023)

RN responsibilities

Each RN accepted into the programme must commit to completing the compulsory online modules and attending all webinars (detailed below). Successful participation in the programme is reliant on the RN having reliable internet connection with a functioning camera and microphone. It is expected that the RN will complete a minimum of 4-8 hours per week of supervised prescribing practice. During the programme the RN will continue to work within the scope of an RN, and until endorsed by NCNZ as a designated community prescriber, will not prescribe any medications. Use of standing orders is permitted.

Competencies for RN prescribing in community health:

1. Understands the relevant regulatory frameworks, local guidelines, and policies and how medicines are monitored and licensed.
2. Has appropriate clinical knowledge including signs and symptoms of minor conditions and infections, clinical pharmacology, including the effects of comorbidity. Has knowledge of drug doses, side effects and drug interactions for prescribing in community health.
3. Demonstrates the ability to assess patients' clinical condition/s and identify and prioritise patient problems. Makes accurate provisional diagnoses and generates appropriate treatment options.
4. Undertakes appropriate and comprehensive history taking including medical, social and medication history, including over the counter and complementary medicines.
5. Documents appropriate, legible, accurate prescriptions and clinical documentation and can use adverse reaction reporting mechanisms.
6. Explains the principles behind prescribing and how they are applied to practice including the cost and effects of prescribing practice.
7. Demonstrates the ability to make appropriate prescribing decisions by analysing the appropriate information. Aware of need to monitor response to medication and lifestyle advice.
8. Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of antimicrobial stewardship and considers whether prescribing an antimicrobial is the best option. Follows local or national guidelines on prescribing the shortest effective course, the most appropriate dose and the route of administration.

9. Effectively communicates with patients and other team members and in partnership develops a dynamic clinical management plan. Advises patient on any risks, expected effects, and potential side effects.
10. Understands the principles of prescribing audit, reflective practice and can identify continuing professional development needs.
11. Recognises own limits and refers and consults with others as required.

From NCNZ standards for recertification programmes in RN prescribing in community health (June 2023)

Outline of the registered nurse prescribing in community health programme

This programme consists of work-based learning under the supervision of a clinical supervisor and formal learning delivered in a blended format. Students engage with content online via HealthLearn and face to face via virtual webinars. This mode of delivery enables equity of access for the rural and remote RN workforce.

The HealthLearn online course consists of seven modules:

- Module One: Health assessment and clinical reasoning
- Module Two: Dermatology and skin
- Module Three: Ear infections
- Module Four: Primary and secondary prevention of rheumatic fever
- Module Five: Legal aspects of designated RN prescribing in community health
- Module Six: Principles of pharmacotherapeutics in relation to prescribing
- Module Seven: Contraception and sexual health

The webinars include the following topics:

- Webinar One: Introduction to RN prescribing in New Zealand
- Webinar Two: Health assessment and health models
- Webinar Three: Antimicrobial resistance and stewardship, ENT assessments
- Webinar Four: General rules of prescribing. Dermatology assessments. Pharmacology presentations
- Webinar Five: Respiratory conditions, Constipation and eye assessments
- Webinar Six: Contraception and sexual health basics
- Webinar Seven: Portfolio requirements and reflection on practice

Webinars are timetabled on the first Tuesday of the month either 9am-1130pm or 1pm-330pm. Attendance at all webinars is compulsory, in extenuating circumstances, and with negotiation with the programme coordinator, catch up opportunities may be arranged.

Contraception prescribing

To be endorsed to prescribe from the contraception part of the formulary, the RN must have completed the Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa 3-day contraception course or equivalent. This course is provided by Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa and is available throughout the year at various locations. All the information regarding this course can be found on the Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa website.

Portfolio/Assessment requirements

On completion of the programme the RN will:

Submit an electronic portfolio demonstrating all requirements for the programme have been met, including:

- Two case studies.

- Self-assessment and assessment by the clinical supervisor against the 11 Competencies for RN prescribing in community health (NCNZ, 2023). This will include evidence of the nurse meeting each competency.
- A third case study relating to prescribing must be submitted if the RN is planning to prescribe from the contraception part of the formulary.
- Case logs, learning goals and all certificates.

Process on successful completion of the programme

When the RN has successfully demonstrated they have met the standards for safe prescribing as a RN prescriber in community health (RNPCH):

- The programme coordinator will provide written notification to the RN that they have met all RNPCH programme requirements.
- The programme coordinator will provide written confirmation to NCNZ that the RN has met all program requirements to be endorsed as a RN prescriber in community health.
- The registered nurse will be responsible for informing their manager to confirm that they have been recertified by NCNZ.
- The programme coordinator may share names of RNs who have successfully completed the programme with the DON/Nurse Advisor of their employing organisation.

Process if the RN does not successfully complete the programme

The programme coordinator will provide written notification to the individual RN that they have not met all RNPCH programme requirements; and will inform them of the process for resubmission of their portfolio.

Appeal process

An appeal can be initiated by an RN at any time by contacting the programme coordinator in writing. The appeals process is available within the programme documents shared with each RN. The appeal application will be reviewed by an independent moderator. Each appeal will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

The nurse may only submit an RNPCH electronic portfolio a total of three times (an initial submission, followed by a maximum of two resubmissions)

Evaluation

Opportunities to evaluate the programme will be provided to the RN, clinical supervisor, and employer to inform further development of the programme.

Questions

Email: nurseprescribing@wellsouth.org.nz