

Proper Use of the Title "Nurse"

Statement of Rationale

"Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, facilitation of healing, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations" (American Nurses Association, ANA, 2015, p. 44).

The above definition describes the comprehensive nature of the nursing profession that is provided to people, both as individual persons and in groups. Nursing practice is learned through complex academic preparation and clinical experience in the study of the human condition. Chapter 464 of the Florida Statutes, the Nurse Practice Act, delineates the practice of nursing in Florida. The Florida Board of Nursing, a legally constituted state agency, regulates the practice of nursing, has the authority to protect the public from unsafe practitioners, and creates standards for nursing education programs.

In Florida, the title "nurse" is reserved for RNs, LPNs, CNSs, CRNAs, CNMs, and ARNPs. A person cannot practice, advertise, or act as a nurse if he/she is not licensed or certified. Doing so is punishable as a misdemeanor of the first degree (Florida Nurse Practice Act, 2017). At least 38 other states restrict the use of the term "nurse" to licensed professionals who have graduated from licensed schools of nursing and meet specific licensure requirements (ANA, 2013).

Nursing is consistently the profession that is recognized for its honesty and high ethical standards. Using the title "nurse" is not up for grabs, but instead represents a high calling among healthcare professionals who have completed academic and licensure requirements for the care of human beings.

Statement of Concern

Being identified with the title "nurse" is a desirable circumstance. Repeatedly, individuals who have technical and/or assistant roles in health care are called "nurse." For example, medical assistants and nursing assistants sometimes introduce themselves as nurses in physicians' offices, nursing homes, or other healthcare venues. The confusion with assistant and nurse roles has been a longstanding problem. Media reports rarely distinguish between Registered Nurses and nurse assistant by simply using the term "nurse." Clarity is needed in order to represent all healthcare roles adequately for knowing how to address safety and quality improvement strategies.

More recently, the Florida Nurses Association (FNA) has been approached by individuals and organizations that want to adopt a title "nurse" in their fields of practice (e.g., veterinarian and dental assistive roles). Such conversations are occurring in other states, not just in Florida. There is concern that such inquiries are increasing and encouraged by casual uses of the title and lack of knowledge of existing laws.

Statement of Position*

FNA supports the legal and proper use of the title "nurse," as defined in State Statute 464, which includes only registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, clinical nurse specialist, certified registered nurse anesthetist, certified nurse midwife, or advanced registered nurse practitioner or use the abbreviation "R.N.," "L.P.N.," "C.N.S.," "C.R.N.A.," "C.N.M.," or "A.R.N.P." The title "nurse" is protected and subject to violations as a first degree misdemeanor.

Recommendations for Action

The Reference Committee moves that the Florida Nurses Association:

1. Encourage Registered Nurses under Chapter 464 of the Florida Statutes to present themselves in all settings and in all ways with their appropriate nurse titles.
2. Request the Board of Nursing to require education about the title "nurse" in nursing assistant programs.
3. Request the Board of Nursing to include the title "nurse" as a topic in ongoing licensure education.
4. Encourage accurate display of credentials in name badges and identifiers in all clinical settings.
5. Encourage the reporting of misuse of the title "nurse," whenever identified.
6. Facilitate clarity in terminology in media and public communications regarding the title "nurse."
7. Continue to inform those requesting expansion of the title beyond the definition and legal use "nurse" of the statement of position.

References:

American Nurses Association. (2015). *Code of ethics for nursing and interpretive statements*. Silver Spring, MD: Nursesbooks.org.

American Nurses Association. (2013). *Title "nurse" protection*. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Policy-Advocacy/State/Legislative-Agenda-Reports/State-TitleNurse>

Nurse Practice Act, the Florida Statutes, Titles and abbreviations; restrictions; penalty, Chapter 464.015 (2017).

* This document is updated from a position taken by the FNA House of Delegates 8/16/1998