



## The Canadian Association of Critical Care Nurses



# Position Statement

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## Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care

### Definition

The nurse practitioner in critical care (NP-cc) is a registered nurse in an advanced nursing practice (ANP) position with a minimum of a masters in nursing and additional educational preparation from an accredited acute-care or critical care NP program and who has clinical expertise in a critical care nursing subspecialty. The NP-cc has advanced knowledge, skill and training in health assessment, physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, diagnostic reasoning, clinical decision-making, therapeutic interventions, family nursing, and ethical decision-making. The NP-cc has the authority through an enhanced legislated scope of nursing practice to diagnose, order and interpret diagnostic tests, prescribe and perform restricted procedures (CNA, 2009).

### Qualifications

- ✦ Registered Nurse
- ✦ Minimum of Masters degree in nursing
- ✦ Current critical care expertise
- ✦ Current appropriate life support certificate(s) [e.g., ACLS, PALS, N-ERP]
- ✦ Licensure as appropriate for jurisdiction
- ✦ CNA's specialty certification in critical care or equivalent to critical care subspecialty (recommended)

### Scope of Practice

The NP-cc is expected to practice in each of the following ANP core competencies: clinical, consultation and collaboration, leadership, and research (CNA, 2008). These competencies incorporate the previously identified five interrelated domains of practice: clinical, education, research, consultation and leadership (CACCN, 2002). These competencies are not separate and distinct but are woven into the everyday functioning of the NP-cc role. The NP-cc applies these competencies across three spheres of influence: the patient (and family); nursing, both the individual and the profession; and organizational systems. Integrated within the practice of each competency are expert skills related to communication, collaboration, and ethical decision-making, as well as effectively moving through the transition of change.

The NP-cc devotes the majority of time to direct patient/family clinical care, which includes complex monitoring and therapies and high-intensity interventions within the full range of high-acuity and technologically complex care. The NP-cc integrates the skills and knowledge from nursing and medicine within a broad framework of advanced nursing practice. The NP-cc functions both autonomously and in collaboration with physicians and other health professionals to: (a) stabilize and manage, in a comprehensive manner, the complex, multi-system, life-threatening illnesses of an



assigned number of acute and chronic critically-ill patients (and their families); (b) minimize complications; (c) restore maximal health potential; (d) provide holistic nursing care to the patient and family; (e) implement strategies to minimize or prevent the problems for which these patients are at risk; and (f) facilitate and coordinate quality end-of-life care when curative goals cannot be achieved.

The NP-cc shares specialized knowledge with other members of the interdisciplinary team to achieve treatment goals and provide continuity of care. The NP-cc acts as a resource person, preceptor and mentor for nurses, students and other professionals. The NP-cc advances the education of nurses and clinical partners through publications and presentations. As a clinical expert within the critical care specialty, the NP-cc partners with nursing colleagues to facilitate the patients' and/or families' learning and promote an environment that maximizes their understanding, participation, and control in their health.

The NP-cc shares specialized knowledge and provides consultation to patients, nurses, other health professionals (both internal and external to the organization), healthcare facilities/institutions, organizations (local, national, and international), and policy makers. The NP-cc consults with others to improve patient care, and to deal with complex and challenging situations faced in the critical care setting.

The NP-cc enhances excellence in critical care nursing by critically appraising research findings and implementing strategies to translate them into practice to improve patient care. The NP-cc has knowledge in research methodology, identifies, conducts, and collaborates in the development of nursing and/or interdisciplinary critical care research and quality improvement projects.

The NP-cc provides professional leadership in the development of standards, policies, procedures, and outcome measures related to critical care and the development of NP-cc advanced practice. The NP-cc plans, implements, and evaluates changes in clinical practice. The NP-cc provides clinical leadership by acting as a resource, facilitator, coordinator, role model, and advocate. The NP-cc's leadership responsibilities should enhance the clinical focus of the role.

CACCN believes that time, opportunity and other supports are needed for the NP-cc to engage in the full scope of the role. The integration of the core competencies will continuously evolve depending on the critical care subspecialty in which the NP-cc is involved, that is, the predictability and complexity of the patients/families cared for by the NP-cc in the critical care setting, the needs of the nursing staff, as well as the education and experiential learning of the nurse in the NP-cc role.

***Approved by the CACCN Board of Directors***

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