

# **Professional and Practice Standards for Multiple Sclerosis Nurses**



**Multiple Sclerosis Nurses Australasia Inc  
(MSNA)**  
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### **Acknowledgements:**

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- Australasian Neurosciences Nurses Association (ANNA)
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC)
- Nursing Council of New Zealand
- UK MS Specialist Nurses Association (UKMSSNA)

## Introduction:

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) nurses are a subspecialty in neuroscience nursing and have become a dynamic group who have worked hard to ensure that high quality, evidence based nursing care is promoted and delivered for all people diagnosed with MS (PwMS). With the pace of ongoing change, and the need for high quality specialised services for PwMS, it is essential that nurses working in this area have the knowledge, skills and competence to provide accurate information and deliver effective and evidence based care for and with PwMS

This resource is designed for all MS nurses and draws upon several existing “Professional Standards” documents. The MSNA Executive Team and State Delegates hope that this document will become a useful tool for all MS nurses; to evaluate and further develop their skills and role whilst working in the field of MS Nursing. The Professional and Practice Standards are intended to provide meaning and value to MS nursing practice and may act as a guide to nurses seeking to enhance their practice, and as a learning tool to support practitioners who are new to the field of MS nursing.

As with all Professional Standard documents, this resource has been developed to reflect current best practice standards in the delivery of MS Nursing care regardless of their work positions, environments or the contexts of their service delivery. As such this document must be fluid and will, as appropriate, be reviewed to ensure it remains current, relevant and reflective of true best practice and MS care.

Of key importance to the *Standards* contained herein are the National Competency Standards for the Registered and Enrolled Nurse in **all** countries affiliated with MSNA Inc. These must be read in conjunction with the MSNA Professional and Practice Standards and the MS Nurse must strive to achieve the following points in their daily practice regardless of role, position or experience in the MS field:

- MS Nursing practice is characterised by increased knowledge, skills and understanding of MS and the ability to make the links between identifying the salient issues in a situation and ways of responding to them in practice.
- The MS nurse is able to detect patterns of change with MS events based on their knowledge, skills and understanding of MS. The MS Nurse is able to provide information, education and emotional support for family / support network; whilst meeting the needs of PwMS.
- The MS Nurse will have a strong understanding of the possible future needs and outcomes for PwMS and their support network. In addition, based on long term relationships with the individual, is able to identify relevant past events and experiences that may impact on future issues.
- Practice is characterised by fluid and skilled performance, based on sound judgement and knowledge and understanding of MS.
- MS Nurses have the ability to develop a holistic understanding of the world of a PwMS. Addressing their issues and concerns and work with the person to understand their priorities. Thus ensuring good direction and guidance through provision of MS Nursing care.
- The MS Nurse plays a pivotal role in terms of guiding services and education for the PwMS, their support network and other relevant health professionals based on sound

knowledge, a breadth of vision and commitment to evidence based clinical practice, care and support.

### **Defining the Role of an MS Nurse:**

The role of the MS Nurse has for many years been recognised as an efficient and crucial role in the setting of this chronic and unpredictable disease. The MS Nurse has a vital role to play in informing and educating people with MS, helping them determine the best treatment to suit both their disease and lifestyle, ensuring they are well-managed and able to adhere to treatment, advocating for them, triaging, trouble-shooting, and managing emotional and clinical issues as and when they arise.

### **Domains of Professional Practice:**

#### **Domain 1: Clinical Knowledge & Practice**

##### ***Practice Standards:***

1.1 Demonstrates sound and current knowledge of MS and the needs of PwMS and their support network.

1.2 Conducts a comprehensive and systematic nursing assessment

1.3 Provides comprehensive, safe and effective evidence based nursing care to achieve identified individual / group health outcomes

1.4 Evaluates progress towards expected health outcomes in consultation with individuals / groups, significant others and interdisciplinary health care team

##### **Performance Criteria**

###### **Management**

- Demonstrates sound and expanding knowledge of disease management and therapeutic options for effective symptom management for PwMS.
- Work with the person with MS and their support network, linking when appropriate with other health professionals to design and implement care pathways in anticipation of potential problems.

###### **Diagnostic Phase**

- Develops a continuing relationship, facilitating individual and support network decision-making in managing the broader impact of the diagnosis. This may include the impact on work, relationships, leisure and finances.

###### **Minimal Impairment Phase**

- Uses clinical assessment skills to perform a holistic assessment.
- Identifies silent and subtle changes through comprehensive understanding of the pathology and presentation of MS.
- Introduces and evaluates management programmes that are sensitive to the individual's specific needs, in partnership with them.

###### **Moderate Disability Phase**

- Recognises the accumulation of symptoms and disability.

- Highlights the rehabilitation potential of the MS patient to the multi-disciplinary team in order to develop rehabilitation strategies, using timely interventions to maximise potential.

#### Severe Disability Phase

- Works proactively with agencies to promote good individualised quality management strategies tailored to choice and need.
- Mediates between services and facilitates complex ethical decision-making.
- Encourage PwMS and those close to them, to discuss issues surrounding quality of life, death and dying. Support them in meeting their wishes and plans as legally and ethically able.

#### Classification

- Discusses the application and limitations of the current diagnostic criteria in clinical practice and understands the rationale for their application.
- Articulate the application of the revised McDonald (2010) criteria to research agendas.

#### Pathology

- Demonstrates knowledge of the current theories of MS pathology, genetic and neuro-immunological research.
- Explains the natural history data in MS and current research models of disease including animal models when relevant and appropriate.

#### Outcome Measurement

- Identifies appropriate scales and assessment tools for specific clinical measurement.
- Understands the significance of reliability and validity data related to outcome measures.

#### Cognitive Impact

- Recognition of subtle cognitive impairment and its impact on psychosocial assessment and interviews.

### **Advanced / Expert Practice**

Demonstrates advanced knowledge of MS and utilises this to identify and manage the needs of clients / patients and their support network living with MS.

Teaches colleagues about new theories and possible future research questions; and expands their level of knowledge and capacity for critical analysis

Educates other health professionals on disease presentation, symptoms and course.

## **Domain 2: Leadership, Teamwork and Collaboration**

### ***Practice Standards:***

2.1 Plans MS nursing care in consultation with individuals/groups, significant others and the interdisciplinary health care team – actively encouraging informed decision making and self management frameworks

2.2 Proactively identifies and seeks to manage issues relating to language, cultural and spiritual sensitivity and diversity.

2.3 Participates in quality improvement activities in relation to practice outcomes, service development and standards / guidelines.

### Performance Criteria

#### Partnerships

- Works with people with MS to ensure they are given sufficient information, in a manner they can understand, in order to make informed choice and are fully involved in their care and treatment decisions. Maintain respect for their independence, values and cultural views.
- Works collaboratively with existing partnerships with health, social, voluntary and independent sectors.

#### Influence and Leadership

- Supports local service provision through participation in multi-disciplinary care management.

#### Professional Networking

- Initiates and fosters new networking opportunities; such as networking with individuals working in other specialist areas.

#### Relationships with Industry

- Uses patient / client experience to influence the pharmaceutical industry to improve patient care, supports and information resources.

#### Quality Improvement Activities

- Leads and participates in case review activities
- Leads and participates in clinical and service audits
- Identifies the need and actively pursues quality improvement opportunities with the inclusion of people with MS

#### Trust and Self-Management

- Empowers the individual and their support network to identify, and work towards achieving, realistic goals of self-management whilst maintaining hope for the future

#### Advocacy

- Ensures the health and community service consumers' voice is recognised in service implementation and development; within resource constraints.
- Creates opportunities at different levels for PwMS to play a part in the development of local services

### **Advanced / Expert Practice**

Functions autonomously utilising specialist skills and knowledge, collaborating with the interdisciplinary health care team to provide comprehensive MS nursing and care

Acts as a positive role model to colleagues and other health professionals, promoting the specialty of MS Nursing

Advocates at a strategic commissioning level on behalf of the local MS population to ensure services are developed and delivered effectively.

Develops new partnerships with health, social, voluntary and independent sectors

Influences local service provision by demonstrating MS nursing leadership and participation in multi-disciplinary professional projects

Participates on a national and international basis with relevant professional bodies

### **Domain 3: Professional Development**

#### ***Practice Standards:***

3.1 Maintains own professional and academic development portfolio; participating in relevant professional development opportunities to enhance MS Nursing care

3.2 Uses best available evidence, standards and guidelines to evaluate professional performance and practice

3.3 Demonstrates and reflects upon strategies used to manage own responses to the professional work environment

3.4 Uses a clinical governance / evidence based framework to identify gaps in knowledge and skills and initiates strategies to address these

#### Performance Criteria

##### Teaching

- Participates and contributes to formal and informal educational opportunities and professional development activities
- Disseminates knowledge by writing for publications and presenting at conferences.
- Is acknowledged as an approachable and valuable resource for MS teaching and expertise.

##### Use of Evaluation Tools

- Promotes innovative ways to optimise learning.
- Uses evaluation to develop new and innovative programmes for higher-level practice.
- Demonstrates reflective practice to identify professional development needs
  - Participates in, as appropriate: Self appraisals & Professional Development Plans (PDP)

##### Teaching People with MS

- Leads the development of local and / or regional education initiatives for PwMS incorporating the concept of the expert patient at all stages of the disease.
- Maximises the use of developing technologies as they become available, for example direct access between clinicians and patients via web-based systems.
- Whenever possible and practical, supports PwMS to deliver, with or without MS Nurse support, relevant and appropriate educational activities to their peers.

### **Advanced / Expert Practice**

#### Development of Educational Programmes

- Identifies and responds to the learning needs of colleagues who need to develop advanced knowledge and skills.
- Develops and sustains productive partnerships, playing a part in the development of relevant educational programmes.

## Mentorship

- Acts as a positive role model at local, national and international levels to help others to challenge practice and promote professional development.
- Facilitates the professional development of colleagues including educating health professionals on disease presentation and symptoms

## Domain 4: Research

### ***Practice Standards:***

4.1 Acknowledges, values and utilises research to enhance the specialty of MS Nursing

4.2 Demonstrates an evidence based practice approach to clinical governance, service delivery and development, MS nursing assessment and care planning with patients / clients.

4.3 Actively pursues information to enhance current knowledge of relevant clinical research and clinical trials

### Performance Criteria

#### Using Research

- Influences policy at organisational / regional / national level by highlighting rigorous research findings and other high level evidence in support of proposed practice / service developments in the field of MS Nursing and care delivery.

#### Doing Research

- Identifies nursing research questions relevant to daily practice and with supervision, designs, carries out and reports on nursing research projects.

#### Patient (Clinical) Trials

- Uses in-depth clinical and research knowledge to inform and empower patients to make well-informed decisions about participating in MS research.

#### Audit

- Contribute to the design of and present MS nurse data as part of multidisciplinary Clinical Audit projects at directorate or organisational level.

## Domain 5: Legal and Ethical Practice

### ***Practice Standards***

5.1 Practises in accordance with relevant legislation affecting nursing practice and health care delivery.

5.2 Practises within a professional and ethical nursing framework

5.3 Practises within an evidence-based framework

5.4 Establishes, maintains and appropriately concludes therapeutic relationships

Performance Criteria:

Legal Practice

- Demonstrates practice that complies with legislation and common law relevant to (MS) nursing practice
- Adheres to legislative and organisational requirements in all aspects of care provision and service delivery

Accountability for Service Demands

- Takes a strategic overview of the service, exploring alternatives for managing caseload / workload and service partners.

Informed Consent

- Provides advice and support to people with MS on issues surrounding informed consent.

Evidence Based Practice

- Uses a clinical governance framework to identify gaps in the evidence base and initiates strategies to address these.

**Advanced / Expert Practice**

Is accountable for developing recommendations for service development and provision.

Provides advice, supervision and co-ordinates peer groups and supports colleagues on ethical issues surrounding informed consent.

## **Registration Codes, Standards and Guidelines – Australia and New Zealand:**

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, June 2016. Registered Nurse Standards for Practice <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, Jan 2006. Enrolled Nurse Standards for Practice <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>

Nursing council of NZ code of conduct [www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/nurses/code of conduct](http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/nurses/code_of_conduct)

Nursing council of NZ Dec 2007 Competencies for registered nurses  
[www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Nurses/Scopes-of-practice/Registered-nurse](http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Nurses/Scopes-of-practice/Registered-nurse)

### **Recommended Resources:**

Australasian Neuroscience Nurses Association, (update) 2013, Professional Standards for Neuroscience Nurses. <http://www.anna.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/ANNA-Professional-Standards-Sep-2013.pdf>

Burke, T. RN, MSCN, Dishon, S. MPA, McEwan, L NP, MScN, CNNc, MSCN, & Smrtka, J. ANP-BC, MSN, MSCN. The Evolving Role of the Multiple Sclerosis Nurse An International Perspective. Int J MS Care. 2011 Fall; 13(3): 105–112.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. NICE Guideline: Multiple sclerosis management in adults: management. October 2014. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg186> accessed 1/11/16

UK MS Specialist Nurses Association Competencies for MS Specialist Nurses (Multiple Contributors). July 2003, MS Trust, Royal College of Nursing

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