



Position statement **TeleHealth**

The purpose of this position statement is to outline key considerations when using TeleHealth

Telehealth is the term for the use of information and communication technologies to deliver health care when clients and care providers are not in the same physical location. (NZ Telehealth Forum 2015)

Nursing practice in Telehealth includes all client centred forms of nursing practice and the provision of information and education for health care professionals occurring through or facilitated by the use of telecommunications or electronic means. (Canadian Nurses Association: Position Statement on Telehealth)

Telehealth practice includes provision of care via telemedicine, tele monitoring, eHealth, mHealth, telenursing and other current and emerging electronic media for providing care.

The New Zealand Nursing Council has set out principles and standards to guide professional behaviour in the Code of Conduct for nurses (2012). These principles and standards apply to all forms of health care delivery including Telehealth. Nurse Executives of New Zealand believe that the provision of nursing care through Telehealth is part of clinical practice and as such nurses must meet the Nursing Council Code of Conduct, the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers Rights 1996 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994.

The purpose of this position statement is to outline key considerations relating to the use of Telehealth in nursing practice.

Therapeutic relationship:

A nurse client relationship and a duty to provide care are established as soon as the nurse interacts with a client using Telehealth technology, and continues throughout the interaction. The therapeutic nurse client relationship in Telehealth involves assessment of client needs, planning, implementation – through the provision of information, referral, education and support – and evaluation of client outcomes.

Nurses engaged in Telehealth take into account clients cultural, spiritual and psychosocial needs and preferences. Nurses document all Telehealth nurse client interactions in electronic or paper format.

- All ethical considerations remain the same during remote consultation as for face-to-face consultation or care.
- Client safety should not be compromised in the decision to use or continue using Telehealth.
- Nurses using Telehealth must be aware of organisational policies or procedures relating to its use.



Competencies and scope of practice:

Nurses using Telehealth must ensure they have the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate and safe care. They must also ensure they have the required level of knowledge about the technologies they are using.

- Nurses must ensure they are practicing within their scope of practice when using Telehealth.
- Nurses providing Telehealth services must have a current Annual Practicing Certificate (APC).
- Nursing Telehealth must be aware of the limits within which care can be safely provided.
- Regardless of the location of the client, nurses engaged in Telehealth are considered to be practicing nursing in the region in which they are located. Nurses providing Telehealth services internationally from a New Zealand base must meet the requirements of the New Zealand Health Practitioners Competence Act 2003, and have a current APC. They must also be aware of and practice within the standards of the health authorities where the client is located.

Client safety in relation to Telehealth:

There is increased risk in providing Telehealth services owing in part to the limitations of technology and the lack of or reduced face to face contact with the client - leading to potential for incomplete or inaccurate information.

- The nurse considers all risks when undertaking Telehealth activities.
- The nurse remains responsible for ensuring the Telehealth services they provide are safe, culturally appropriate, and meet legal, professional and ethical standards.
- A record of all Telehealth interactions is kept which meets the requirements of the Privacy Act; the record is preferably made available in the clients integrated electronic health record.

Professional practice:

Nurses engaged in Telehealth activities require clinical guidelines, protocols and organisational policies and procedure. Access for nurses to professional development and support in the safe provision of Telehealth needs to be available.

Nurses engaged in Telehealth services have an obligation to advocate for systems that promote the safe and competent and ethical delivery of Telehealth services and to act when client care is compromised.

Nursing has a role in research and development that informs and evaluates Telehealth practice particularly in the areas of clinical outcomes for clients, accessibility and cost effectiveness of services.



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Acknowledgements: Canadian Nurses Association, NZ Medical Association, NZ Telehealth Forum, Nursing Council of New Zealand.

References:

Canadian Nurses Association: *Position Statement on Telehealth*.
Ministry of Health (2003). *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act*.
New Zealand Medical Association (2014). *Telehealth and Remote Consultation*.
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