

QUALITY ASSURANCE MODULE #5: **SELF-REGULATION**

SELF-REGULATION – WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND AS A PROFESSIONAL NURSE?

As a professional nurse, understanding the concept of self-regulation is important because of its definition. Whether you are a novice, advanced beginner, or expert nurse, you understand that protecting the public is at the core of your chosen profession.

Self-regulation defines the practice of any given profession, and describes the parameters within which

it should function, including the requirements and qualifications to practice the nursing profession. The College of Nurses of Ontario's ultimate responsibility is to protect public interest from unqualified, incompetent, and unethical healthcare providers. There are two important aspects about self-regulation:

1. First, the consumer rights must be protected and promoted through the advocacy role of the nurse.
2. Secondly, the public lacks the specialized knowledge about their health and the healthcare system.

Therefore, because of this unequal balance of knowledge and power, healthcare professionals have been monitoring their own professions to insure the public of ethical and safe practice.

WHAT IS SELF-REGULATION?

For any profession, there are two approaches to regulation. The first one is regulation by the government (or third party); and self regulation by the profession. With self-regulation, the government delegates to a profession the power to regulate its members/peers. The intent is not to advance the profession, but to promote and protect the public interest.

In 1989, a report entitled, "Striking a New Balance", was prepared by the Health Professions Legislation Review (HPLR), to create a comprehensive review of the regulation of health professionals in Ontario.

The fundamental principle of this report is outlined below:

"The public is the intended beneficiary of regulation, not the members of the professions. Thus the purpose of granting self-regulation to a profession is not to enhance its status or to increase the earning power of its members by giving the profession a monopoly over the delivery of particular health services."

The foundation of self-regulation rests with the concept that the profession has a commitment to the philosophy that public protection comes first. This regulation assures the public that they are receiving safe and ethical care from competent, ethical, and qualified nurses.

It defines the practice boundaries of the nursing profession, including the requirements and qualifications to practice. Self-regulation allows a professional body to act on behalf of the government in regulating its members. The government realizes that the profession has unique knowledge necessary to establish standards of practice and evaluate its membership.

Practice Reflection Worksheet

The following are key questions that you may consider when you reflect on your practice. The following illustrates an example of how you may document your reflective practice with the intent of developing the QA Program Learning Plan.

Describe an experience, event, or change in your practice or practice setting that was significant to you.

1. I was approached by my client's daughter that she wanted her mother restrained at night as she was worried she would fall out of bed and break her hip. I explained to her that we have a policy of least restraints. This has created conflict between me and the daughter.
2. I recently documented in the wrong patient's chart and I discarded my notes. My manager brought this to my attention and informed me that I did not meet the College of Nurses documentation standards.

Based on what you described above, what were your strengths and what were your areas of improvement?

1. I participated on the restraint committee developing our workplace policy following the legislation and standards. Along with other colleagues, we shared this at our staff meeting. I have worked hard with my clients and families to develop strategies not to use restraints on their loved one.
2. Since my documentation error I have learned more about the principles of documentation and how to correct errors. I want to share this with my colleagues.

What input have you received from your peers about your practice?

1. I am always trying to improve nursing practice.
2. I like to teach others and work well with nursing students.
3. I am a patient advocate and an effective communicator.

Based on your own reflection and input you received, what are your learning needs?

1. I need to complete the Documentation Learning module from the College of Nurses of Ontario (www.cno.org) to ensure I know all of my practice expectations to practice safely and competently.
2. I need to provide better education and more information to patient's families to help them understand the risks and benefits of restraints.

References:

Canadian Nurses Association (2008) Understanding Self-Regulation. Nursing Now. Ottawa: Author.

