

The Role of the Registered Nurse in Ambulatory Care Position Statement



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Background

It is a new era in ambulatory care nursing where rapidly advancing technologies and non-traditional healthcare services are leading and driving innovation. To keep pace as new technologies and care models emerge, the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) charges ambulatory care registered

nurses (RNs) to partner with, contribute to, and prepare future nurses to work with both nursing and non-nursing entities to ensure that ambulatory nursing's expertise is recognized and incorporated into its practice, education, research, and leadership.

Ambulatory care is a broad category of professional healthcare services provided to patients on an outpatient basis without admission to a hospital or facility, including emergency departments (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2023). Ambulatory care RNs practice in diverse settings, including traditional medical, specialty, and community clinics, as well as urgent care centers, correctional facilities, pharmacies, school systems, college/university clinics, adult day care centers, public health centers, camps, patients' homes, home health organizations, shelters, occupational health clinics, sports

teams, procedural centers, and military institutions. The role of the RN in ambulatory care focuses on maximizing quality health outcomes in collaboration with the individuals, families, caregivers, communities, and populations of interest served across the lifespan (Lukewich et al., 2022).

The unique scope and dimensions of ambulatory care nursing practice emphasizes the individual as well as population health through attention to preventive, primary care, and specialty services; mitigation of health disparities; consideration of social determinants of health; provision of health education; support for self-care and chronic diseases management; facilitation of care transitions; and patronage at end of life (Smolowitz et al., 2015; National Advisory Council on Nurse Education & Practice, 2016; Laughlin & Witwer, 2019; Hacker et al., 2022; Lukewich et al., 2022). The breadth of ambulatory care nursing extends from independent to collaborative practice, direct care to telehealth to case management, disaster preparedness to disaster response and management, and individuals to populations of interest across the lifespan (Pelkowski et al., 2022).

AAACN Position Statement

The AAACN serves as an influential body of experts for excellence and innovation in the design and promotion of nursing practice, education, research, and leadership. AAACN's position statement is intended to articulate the vision and principles of AAACN with the associated values of diversity, inclusion, and equity that are central to this mission. The AAACN seeks inclusion and advocacy that values ambulatory care nursing's contributions within the broader context of healthcare

delivery from established nursing organizations (American Nurses Association, American Organization for Nurse Leaders, National League for Nursing, American Nursing Informatics Association), academic institutions, policy makers and legislators, third-party payors, healthcare institutions and entrepreneurs, and technology companies (Cipriano et al., 2013). The clarion call of The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity (Institute of Medicine, 2021) identified that all nurses regardless of care setting are responsible for patient care, accountable for health outcomes, and are expected to lead.

In practice, the ambulatory care RN:

- Leads and disseminates expertise in nursing care;
- Engages patients and members of the interprofessional team in improving health outcomes that address disparities and social determinants of health;
- Delivers person-centered, high quality, safe and effective evidence-based care;
- Coordinates care and transitions of care; and
- Delegates to and evaluates nursing practice provided by non-nurse colleagues.

In education, the ambulatory care RN:

- Ensures the attainment and maintenance of core competencies in nursing assessment, nursing care and evaluation of nursing treatments, and coordination of care;
- Engages in academic practice partnerships to ensure future ambulatory care RNs are prepared for entry to practice; and
- Promotes the advancement of nursing clinical knowledge, proficiency in practice, and scholarship in all nurses.

In research, the ambulatory care RN:

- Builds the science of ambulatory care nursing and contributes to interprofessional discoveries;
- Utilizes evidence-based practice methodologies to address problems and identify nursing solutions;
- Actively participates in conducting quality improvement activities and research; and
- Innovates and disseminates nursing scholarship and clinical practice.

In leadership, the ambulatory care RN:

- Advocates for the health desires and needs of individuals, families, and populations of interest across the lifespan and ambulatory settings;
- Partners with patients, communities, legislators, payers, and other healthcare leaders to advance equitable healthcare at local, state, and national levels;

- Integrates ambulatory care nursing delivery models with payer models of reimbursement, and care management;
- Advances the integration of technology that improves health care delivery and health outcomes; and
- Creates a healthy work environment that recruits, retains, and supports RNs.

The AAACN affirms that the ambulatory care RN is an expert in ambulatory nursing care practicing to the full extent of their education, competence, and license who must be compensated for the care they provide to individuals, families, and populations of interest. The ambulatory care RN enhances evidence-based innovations while eliminating barriers to expand accessibility, availability, and affordability of care to all individuals, families, and populations of interest in diverse ambulatory care settings through the continuous evolution and advancement of ambulatory care nursing.

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The American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) is the only association for practicing nurses and nursing leaders specialized in serving people in community and hospital-based outpatient care settings. AAACN supports RNs by providing programs that advance holistic and evidence-based patient care and by advocating for their essential role in the future of health care.



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