



Administering medicines and dose administration aids position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement outlines the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) position on the role of registered nurses, midwives, enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing in administering medicines and the use of dose administration aids for self-administration. It should be read with the ANMF publication: *Nursing guidelines: management of medicines in aged care*.^{1,2}

2. Definitions

Dose administration aids are used to organise doses of tablets and capsules according to when they should be taken. They are intended to help a competent person administer their own medicine when it is safe for them to do so.

Medicine assistance is when an enrolled nurse or assistant in nursing helps a patient self-administer their own medicine using a dose administration aid.

3. Context

Administering medicines is a function of registered nurses and registered midwives and of enrolled nurses without a notation on the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) register which reads 'does not hold Board-approved qualification in administration of medicines'³

Dose administration aids do not themselves provide for safe medicine administration, so guidelines for their safe use are needed.

4. Position

Administering medicines

Registered nurses and midwives

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. To promote safe care and competent practice, a suitably qualified registered nurse or midwife must administer medicines to any individual who is:
 - unable to self-administer
 - unable to take responsibility for decisions about when to take their medicines and when not to take their medicines.

¹ The term assistant in nursing refers to all care workers however titled.

² Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. *Nursing Guidelines: Management of Medicines in Aged Care* 2013. Available at https://www.anmf.org.au/media/akibuo1s/management_of_medicines_guidelines_2013.pdf

³ Enrolled nurses who have not completed the education to allow them to administer medicines will have a notation on their registration which prohibits them from administering medicines. See Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2016. Fact sheet on Enrolled nurses and medicine administration. Available at <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/FAQ/Enrolled-nurses-and-medicine-administration.aspx>.



2. A registered nurse or midwife may delegate:
 - medicine administration to an enrolled nurse who is qualified and competent to do it
 - medicine assistance to an enrolled nurse or an assistant in nursing when the registered nurse or midwife have assessed that it is safe and appropriate to do so.
3. To determine whether it is safe and appropriate to delegate medicine administration or medicine assistance, the registered nurse or midwife must first consider and assess:
 - the capacity of the patient
 - the competence of the enrolled nurse or assistant in nursing
 - the legality and appropriateness of delegating.
4. To guide this assessment process, the registered nurse or midwife must follow the NMBA decision-making framework (DMF).⁴

Enrolled nurses qualified to administer medicines

In keeping with the NMBA *Enrolled nurse standards for practice*, it is the position of the ANMF that:⁵

5. For all nursing activities, including administering medicines, enrolled nurses work under the direction, supervision and delegation of registered nurses and midwives.
6. Enrolled nurses qualified to administer medicines (i.e. registered without notation) can:
 - administer medicines to a patient when delegated this responsibility by the registered nurse or midwife
 - provide support and guidance to an assistant in nursing who has been directed by a registered nurse or midwife to help an individual self-administer their medicines.
7. Enrolled nurses qualified to administer medicines cannot delegate medicine assistance to an assistant in nursing.

Enrolled nurses not qualified to administer medicines and assistants in nursing

It is the position of the ANMF that:

8. For all nursing activities, enrolled nurses not qualified to administer medicines and assistants in nursing work under the direction, supervision and delegation of registered nurses and midwives.
9. Enrolled nurses not qualified to administer medicines and assistants in nursing can only assist a person to self-administer their medicines when delegated this responsibility by the registered nurse or midwife.
10. Enrolled nurses not qualified to administer medicines and assistants in nursing must not be involved in administering medicines to a person who has been assessed as unable to self-administer.

⁴ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). *Decision-making framework (DMF)*. Available at <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Frameworks.aspx>.

⁵ The NMBA Enrolled nurse standards for practice are available at <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines-statements/professional-standards/enrolled-nurse-standards-for-practice.aspx>.



Dose administration aids

Assessing individuals

It is the position of the ANMF that:

11. Dose administration aids may be used by an individual to self-administer their medicines when it is safe for them to do so.
12. To be safe, the individual using the dose administration aid must be competent to:
 - determine the name of the medicine and its purpose
 - determine the dose and frequency of the medicine so they know what to take and when to take it.
13. Individuals using health or aged care services either as an inpatient in a hospital; a resident in an aged care facility or disability service; living in the community; or in a correctional facility must first be assessed to determine that it is safe and appropriate for them to use a dose administration aid.
14. All such facilities must have written policies and procedures about the use of dose administration aids including:
 - the criteria for assessing a person's suitability to self-administer medicine
 - any restrictions to the medicines that can be self-administered
 - a process for checking medicine orders against the dispensed administration aid.
15. In all such facilities, assessing a person's suitability to self-administer medicine must be done by the prescribing practitioner in collaboration with other relevant members of the medicines team such as the treating medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, midwife or pharmacist.
16. Confirmation that an individual may self-administer their medicines must be documented in the individual's health record and their medicine chart along with updated assessments as their needs change.
17. When an individual has been assessed as unable to self-administer their medicines, their medicines must be administered by a registered nurse or midwife or an enrolled nurse qualified to administer medicines who has been delegated to do so by the registered nurse or midwife.

Packaging aids

18. Dose administration aids should provide for single dose medicine packaging such as blister or sachet packs and ensure that:
 - all information on them can be read by people with poor eyesight
 - individual medicines can be readily identified
 - the medicine to be taken cannot become mixed with medicines not yet due to be taken
 - the quality of the medicines for each time slot is preserved
 - any tampering with the medicines is evident.



19. If the dose administration aid being used is a blister pack, it must be prepared and labelled by a pharmacist and include:
 - the individual's name
 - the name and strength of the medicine
 - the dosage, frequency, and route of administration.
20. When a prescriber alters the medicine instructions, the dose administration aid must be returned to the pharmacist for repackaging and labelling.

Preparing dose administration aids

21. A registered nurse or midwife may only package an individual's medicines into a dose administration aid if:
 - their state drugs and poisons legislation permits it
 - the individual is competent to self-administer and fully understands the medicines they are taking and why; when and how to take them and for how long; and when not to take them
 - there is a mechanism in place for the aid to be refilled if a spillage occurs
 - the filled aid can, and will, be safely stored in a way that complies with state or territory legislation and with the recommendations made by the dispensing pharmacist.
22. A registered nurse or midwife must not fill an aid for another worker to administer. The aids are for self-administration only.
23. The aid should contain no more than a seven-day supply of medicine and be labelled with:
 - the full name of the individual
 - the name and strength of the medicine
 - the dose, route and frequency of the medicine
 - the commencement date and duration of the medicine regime.

5. Position statement management

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