REGISTERED NURSE DELEGATION IN THE EMERGENCY SETTING

Description

The demand for health care services today are combined with an increasing complexity in the care delivery process, high patient acuity, technological innovations, advanced patient care protocols, and an ever increasing shortage of nurses in clinical practice. As emergency care setting has become increasingly busy caring for patients with multidimensional acute and chronic diseases, end-stage disease, trauma, behavior health and primary healthcare needs nursing staff is being stretched to its limit. One means of ensuring quality care is provided in a timely manner to patients is through the utilization of non-registered nurse staff to perform tasks delegated to them by the registered nurse. The American Nurses Association defines delegation as “transferring the responsibility for the performance of a task from one person to another while the nurse retains accountability for the outcome.” Patient care tasks or activities may be performed by non-registered nurse members of the emergency department health care team such as licensed practical/vocational nurses, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and unlicensed health care workers.

ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that:

1. Emergency registered nurses are accountable for the provision of patient care.
2. Emergency registered nurses are well informed about the principles of delegation and the state laws that regulate their practice.
3. Emergency registered nurses may delegate tasks or elements of care to non-RN caregivers, but may not delegate the nursing process itself.
4. Emergency registered nurses use the principles for safeguarding patient health, safety and well-being when following the Five Rights of Delegation to determine the appropriate utilization of resources and ensure the delegated assignment is:
   - The right task
   - Under the right circumstances
   - To the right person
   - With the right directions and communication
   - Under the right supervision and evaluation

Background

Health care organizations are accountable for providing emergency registered nurses the appropriate environment to be successful at delegation. Ensuring that nurses are involved in
developing organizational policies, sufficient staffing, providing for the educational needs of the non-nurses, and the establishment of systems to measure, observe, and validate ongoing competency requirements are all fundamental to supporting safe and effective registered nurse delegation. Sufficient staffing, providing for the educational needs of the non-nurses, documentation of staff competencies, and ensuring nurses are involved in developing organizational policies, and the establishment of systems to measure, observe, and validate ongoing competency requirements are all fundamental to supporting safe and effective registered nurse delegation.²

Emergency registered nurse strategies for successful delegation include being familiar with the organization’s policies and procedures related to delegation, and pursuit of guidance and appropriate direction from supervisors or mentors. Mastering the art and science of delegation is a critical step on the pathway to achieving nursing excellence in an environment of “safe practice, safe care.”⁴

References


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This Position Statement combines and replaces Delegation by the Emergency Nurse (9/2010) and Non-RN Caregivers in Emergency Care (7/2003).

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