

Advisory Ruling on Nursing Practice

Title: The Role of the Nurse in Assisting with Peripheral Nerve Block Placement

Advisory Ruling Number: 23-01

Date Issued: 03/15/2023

Date Revised:

Authority:

The Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing (Board) is created and authorized by Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) c. 13, §§ 13, 14, 14A, 15 and 15D, and G.L. c. 112, §§ 74 through 81C to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the Commonwealth through the regulation of nursing practice and education. In addition, M.G.L. c.30A, § 8 authorizes the Board to make advisory rulings with respect to the applicability to any person, property, or state of facts of any statute or regulation enforced or administered by the Board. Each nurse is required to practice in accordance with accepted standards of practice and is responsible and accountable for his or her nursing judgments, actions, and competency. The Board's regulation at 244 CMR 9.03(6) requires all nurses to comply with any other law and regulation related to licensure and practice.

Scope of Practice: Registered Nurse (RN)

Purpose:

To guide the practice of the Registered Nurse (RN) who is assisting an anesthesia provider with the placement of a peripheral nerve block.

Advisory:

The RN licensed by the Board will engage in the practice of nursing in accordance with accepted professional standards. The nurse must acquire and maintain necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities before assuming duties and responsibilities for assisting with the placement of a peripheral nerve block as described herein.

The RN, whose sole responsibility is to assist with the placement of the peripheral nerve block, does so in the presence of a licensed anesthesia provider trained in the placement of peripheral nerve blocks. When assisting with the procedure, a 1:1 nurse/patient ratio applies.

It is the Board's position that RNs who have attained the required knowledge and competencies may assist with the placement of a peripheral nerve block by an

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anesthesia provider by acting as the anesthesia provider's "extra set of hands" and may inject local anesthetic through the peripheral nerve catheter under the direct supervision and instruction of the anesthesia provider. At the time the RN is injecting the anesthetic medication through the peripheral nerve catheter, the anesthesia provider maintains the position of the needle and the catheter. The RN may also adjust the stimulator's amplitude and/or make setting changes on the ultrasound monitor at the direction of the anesthesia provider.

The RN may aspirate and push the plunger of the syringe containing the anesthetic medications when directed to do so by the anesthesia provider. It is not within the scope of RN practice to insert or otherwise place the needle.

Professional standards recognize the RN as responsible and accountable for possessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the activity safely, effectively, and competently including, but not limited to:

- Moderate sedation
- Intralipid protocol
- Recognition of signs and symptoms of local anesthetic/ anesthesia medication toxicity including cardiac arrhythmias and seizures,
- Pharmacology of local anesthetics/ anesthesia medications
- Performance of neurovascular/neurological checks
- Knowledge of
 - each type of block performed,
 - therapeutic effects,
 - associated side effects
 - possible adverse reactions associated with the specific block performed including local anesthesia toxicity
 - any indicated emergency interventions.
 - management of emergencies

Definitions:

- Anesthesia provider-a CRNA or physician licensed and authorized to practice as an anesthesia provider.
- Direct supervision-the anesthesia provider is always physically present in the suite directly at the bedside where the procedure is being performed in which the assistance with administration of anesthetic medications is being provided by the RN.
- Peripheral nerve block-a type of regional anesthesia that blocks the sensation of pain to a specific limb, area, or region.
- Extra set of hands-the role of RNs assisting with procedures described within this statement in which both anesthesia providers' hands are otherwise engaged in carrying out complex aspects of the procedure.

These complex aspects of the procedure carried out by the anesthesia provider are otherwise outside of the scope of practice of the RN.¹

Responsibilities of the Nurse in the Management Role:

The nurse in the management role must ensure that organizational policies include, but are not limited to:

- Listing specific medications to be used for peripheral nerve blocks, their purpose, goals, techniques, desired outcomes, and the recommended dose per kilogram of body weight that may be safely administered by a RN.
- Nursing care responsibilities, including, but not limited to patient assessment, monitoring, medication administration, potential complications, and documentation criteria.
- Emergency protocols including, but not limited to, immediate, on-site availability of resuscitative equipment, medications, and personnel.
- Protocols for assessing and documenting the education and validation for RN initial and continued competency; and
- Protocols for provision of care that are clear, complete, and culturally appropriate.

References:

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN). (2019). Clinical practice: frequently asked question. What is ASPAN's recommendation regarding the role of the perianesthesia nurse during a preoperative peripheral nerve block? Retrieved at <https://www.aspan.org/Clinical-Practice/Clinical-Practice-Frequently-Asked-Questions>

Louisiana State Board of Nursing (n.d.). Declaratory statement on the registered nurse assisting with peripheral nerve blocks. Accessed at <https://d3dkdvqff0zqx.cloudfront.net/groups/lsms/attachments/draft%20ds%20peripheral%20nerve%20block.pdf>

¹ Louisiana State Board of Nursing (n.d.). Declaratory statement on the registered nurse assisting with peripheral nerve blocks. Accessed at <https://d3dkdvqff0zqx.cloudfront.net/groups/lsms/attachments/draft%20ds%20peripheral%20nerve%20block.pdf>

References continued

Russell, R.A., Burke, K., Gattis, K. (2013). Implementing a regional anesthesia block nurse team in the perianesthesia care unit increases patient safety and perioperative efficiency. *Journal of Perianesthesia Nursing*. Volume 28, Issue 1 pp3-10 accessed at: [https://www.jopan.org/article/S1089-9472\(12\)00523-0/fulltext](https://www.jopan.org/article/S1089-9472(12)00523-0/fulltext)

Code of Massachusetts Regulations 244 CMR 3.00 Registered and Licensed Practical Nurse. Retrieved at [244 CMR 3.00: Registered nurse and licensed practical nurse | Mass.gov](#)

Code of Massachusetts Regulations 244 CMR 9.00 Standards of Conduct. Retrieved at [244 CMR 9.00: Standards of conduct for nurses | Mass.gov](#)

MA Board of Registration in Nursing (2018). Advisory Ruling # 9324 Accepting, Verifying, Transcribing and Implementing Prescriber Orders. Retrieved at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ar-9324-accepting-verifying-transcribing-and-implementing-medication-orders/download>