



Competencies for nurses working in primary health care



Objectives

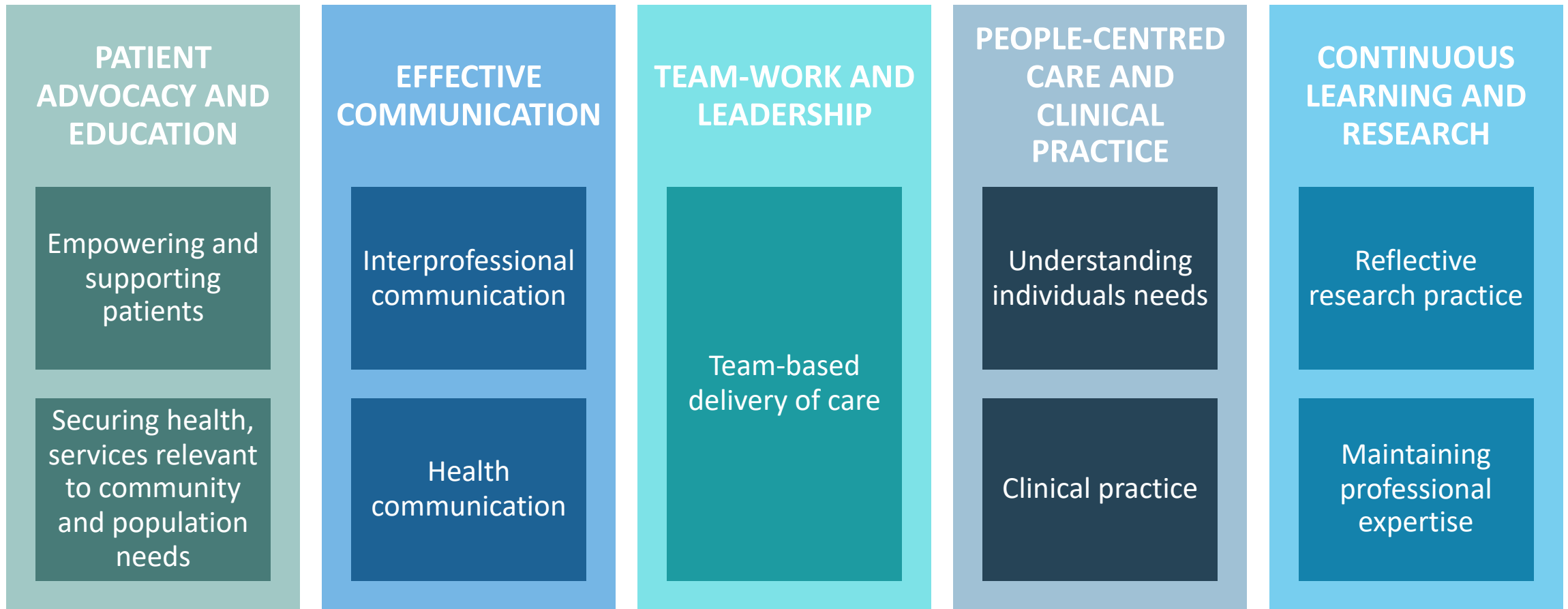
Primary care represents the first level of personal health care services in the community, which ensures accessible, continual, whole-person care for health needs throughout an individual's lifespan. Primary care professionals work with patients and their families to address their immediate and long-term health needs and not just for a set of specific diseases with an approach that addresses the broader determinants of health and the interrelated aspects that influence people's physical, mental, and social well-being.

Nurses have a key role to play in primary care in expanding, connecting and coordinating care. Through their training and work, they are well placed and have been shown to provide safe and effective care in disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, management and rehabilitation. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and inspiration for policymakers, instructors, managers and clinicians who are seeking to develop and secure competencies among their nursing workforce in primary care. These should be adjusted to each country's context.

The document has been reviewed by a group of experts from Glasgow Caledonian University, the International Council of Nurses and Public Health England. The competencies are aligned with the five competency clusters identified by the WHO Regional Office for Europe as crucial for integrated care and presented in Strengthening a competent health workforce for the provision of coordinated/integrated health services.¹

¹Langins M, Borgemans L. Strengthening a competent health workforce for the provision of coordinated/integrated health services. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2015.

Competencies for nursing working in primary care



Patient advocacy and education



Ability to promote patients' entitlement to ensure the best quality of care and empowering patients to become active participants of their health.



Key competencies in patient advocacy and education

Empowering and supporting patients

- Provide nursing care, considering cultural and ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, physical or mental capacity and values or beliefs.
- Develop, deliver and evaluate evidence-informed teaching materials in health promotion and disease prevention for patients and their families that reflect and protect the individual, social and occupational determinants of health of the populations being served.
- Work towards improving health literacy and supporting self-management among patients to prevent negative effects of risk factors and diseases.
- Identify affordable health-care programmes and inform and support patients on how to access them.

Securing health services relevant to community and population needs

- Monitor, identify and set priorities for local population health needs to adjust care to respond to the social and occupational determinants of health reflected in the community health needs.
- Develop evidence-informed strategies and services that respond to the social and occupational determinants of health reflected in the community health needs.
- Enable individuals and communities to positively influence the social and occupational determinants of health through advocacy and empowerment in collaboration with community services.
- Build partnerships with community services, general practice groups and patient care groups to support effective population health responses and improved health outcomes.

Effective Communication



Ability to quickly establish rapport with patients and their family members in an empathetic and sensitive manner incorporating the patients' perceived and declared culture.



Key competencies in effective communication

Interprofessional communication

- Identify and communicate relevant nursing theory and practice within the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams tasked with caring for patients and communities.
- Demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills using relevant technologies.
- Build and maintain relationships with the nursing community, general practice groups and actors identified in caring for patients to ensure improved health outcomes.
- Communicate effectively to prevent and resolve conflicts.

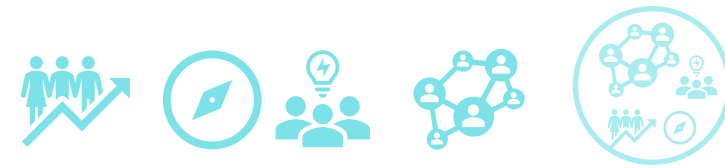
Health communications

- Build and maintain professional therapeutic relationships with patients through effective, safe and appropriate (sensitive and empathetic) communication.

Team-work and leadership



Ability to function effectively as a member of an interprofessional team that includes providers, patients and family members in a way that reflects an understanding of team dynamics and group/team processes in building productive working relationships and is focused on health outcomes.



Key competencies in team-work and leadership

Team-based delivery of care

- Work collaboratively with community services, and in cross-sectoral multidisciplinary teams, to deliver people-oriented health promotion, disease prevention and continuity of care.
- Lead and participate in complex care management teams with the goal of helping to improve the care of patients with multiple comorbidities.
- Coordinate effectively with other actors in the health sector in relation to hospital discharge planning or referral and facilitating patients' access to other services.

People-centred care and clinical practice



Ability to create conditions for providing coordinated/integrated services centred on the patients and their families' needs, values and preferences along a continuum of care and over the life-course.



Key competencies in people-centred care and clinical practice (1/3)

Understanding individuals needs

- Assess the nature of a patient's family, social support and other socioeconomic resources that might affect the individual's health.
- Plan and implement care in close collaboration with the patients and their families, friends or caregivers (if appropriate) in a nonjudgemental and respectful manner.
- Assess and apply the type and intensity of services to the needs for the patient, ensuring timely, non-redundant, safe and effective care.
- Manage alternative and conflicting views from family, caregivers, friends and members of the interprofessional team to maintain focus on the patient's wellbeing.



Key competencies in people-centred care and clinical practice (2/3)

Clinical practice

- Deliver preventive programmes, health assessment and screenings with the goal of improving health outcomes, promoting self-care management and facilitating access to services and resources.
- Provide health education and disease management for noncommunicable² and communicable diseases, sexual and reproductive health and rights and lifestyle interventions.
- Provide safe, effective and evidence-informed nursing care and health services consistent with current standards, clinical practice guidelines, regulations and legislation.
- Ability to work independently, triage, assess, plan, implement and evaluate acute and chronic care.
- Managing noncommunicable diseases: review patient treatments using relevant protocols (adjust diabetes medications, support injection techniques, prevent complications and treat diabetic wounds and asthma control and education), monitor treatment outcome and provide counselling and support for behaviour change.

² Noncommunicable diseases tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors. The main types are cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke), cancer, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.



Key competencies in people-centred care and clinical practice (3/3)

Clinical practice

- Protect the health of women, including cervical screenings, breast screening, menopause care and perinatal mental health problems.
- Protect child health by supporting breastfeeding and optimal early nutrition together with promoting and providing newborn screening programmes and childhood immunization.
- Promote sexual and reproductive health and rights through family planning, contraceptives and sexually transmitted infection screening.
- Understand and address the social and occupational determinants of health, such as differences in health-seeking behaviour and cardiovascular risk factors among men.

Continuous learning and research



Ability to demonstrate reflective practice, based on the best available evidence and to assess and continually improve the services delivered as an individual provider and as a member of an interprofessional team.



Key competencies in continuous learning and research

Reflective research practice

- Participate in developing, implementing and evaluating relevant policies and procedures to improve the quality and effectiveness of nursing care and to promote patient safety.
- Identify risk and safety issues and facilitate possible solutions.
- Lead, develop and support clinical research and quality improvement activities and provide education and training to colleagues, students and communities

Maintaining professional expertise

- Maintain professional expertise and a strong evidence-informed approach and practice in accordance with the newest evidence-informed practice guidelines, legislation and policies.
- Maintain a commitment to continuing professional development in primary care practice, new and emerging issues and the changing needs of patient populations.
- Engage in training to use and promote new eHealth tools when applicable, including telehealth, telemedicine, mobile health, electronic health records and data to support efficient and evidence-informed patient care.



The full rapid review of competencies in primary care will be launched on International Nursing Day, 12 May 2020 and will be available at: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/.nursing-and-midwifery>

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For more information on nursing and midwifery at the WHO European Regional Office for Europe, visit:
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