



Hello,

The holiday season is here, bringing many delights and also many demands on our time, energy and wallets. It's an important time to focus on taking care of ourselves and others. This issue illustrates how we can take care in our workplace, reflecting on these Professional Standards:

The registered nurse or midwife "considers and responds in a timely manner to the health and well being of self and others in relation to the capability for practice." [3.1/3.8]

And the enrolled nurse "promotes the safety of self and others in all aspects of nursing practice." [3.9]

The self is distinctly mentioned in these Standards. We can't give our best care to others if we aren't taking care of ourselves. We wish you a restorative holiday season and a happy New Year.

- Adj Prof John G. Kelly AM, President, Nursing & Midwifery Council of NSW



An interview with Jacqui Cross, NSW Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officer

This month we caught up with NSW Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officer Jacqui Cross, who shares her reflections on:

- why she became a nurse
- what inspires her
- and how we can each strengthen professional standards in our own practice.

What drew you to the nursing profession?

I came to nursing a bit later on; I was called a “mature-aged student” when I went to study it at age 21! I’ve always been a people person and I think for me it was about wanting to make a difference. At the time I don’t think that I appreciated the diversity that a career in nursing could bring. But I’ve found that every day there is something that inspires you about it. It’s a great privilege.

What is your favourite memory or part of being a nurse?

My favourite thing has been the people I’ve worked with, bumping into people I had met bedside, and experiences like going to see the Essentials of Care showcase and learning what nurses are doing to enhance their work. I often reflect on and value the support and guidance that I have received from those I have worked with throughout my career.

At the Nursing & Midwifery Council, we focus on promoting safe professional practice as one way of protecting public safety so we would welcome your perspective on professional standards. How would you describe the importance of the understanding and application of professional standards in the workplace?

We all have a responsibility to understand them and how they define our practice. It is a very important individual responsibility. But we’re also responsible for how we come together as a team to make sense of what our practice is about. The Standards framework provides meaning to our practice and are our guiding principles, the glue that holds it all together. The Standards help us make decisions and can help us develop our own practice.

How do you think the standards such as the Code of Conduct and Standards for Practice can be used in the workplace?

It is all of our responsibility to have an awareness and understanding of the Codes and the Standards of Practice. They underpin what it is to be a professional and ensure that we provide care that is safe and compassionate.

A practical way to utilise the codes and standards is as part of our performance development conversations and feedback, and also at a team level, when we are making decisions about models of care, in our focus on safe, quality care, and in our values and beliefs as professionals.

They are the underpinning values of what we expect from ourselves and from each other as professionals, and most importantly what the public has a right to expect. We have a responsibility to ensure that not only are we safe, but that others around us are also practicing in a safe and ethical manner.

Teamwork and collaboration seem to be a significant part of your leadership style. What can you tell our readers about that?

That way of working really resonates with me, how we collaborate and come together. We're as strong as the sum of our parts. As leaders, we need to create environments where we maintain dialogue and people can be listened to. Nurses are the biggest part of the (health) workforce, so when we come together we can create strong things. The Essentials of Care program has uncovered many good examples of this.

The Essentials of Care Program aims to enhance the experiences of patients, families and staff in part by developing effective workplace cultures. It talks about developing a culture of critical inquiry in regard to the delivery of care – preventing risk and promoting safety, and having a learning and development culture. How do you think practitioners can create a “learning” culture so that nurses and midwives feel safe to discuss issues in the workplace? Where do you think the standards fit within this culture?

As nurses and professionals, it's about, how do we ask critical questions and understand the decisions we make? We need supportive, person-centred cultures so we can explore that together. It's about understanding our values as a team and looking at how we interact as colleagues, which is particularly where those codes fit, underpinning how we work as professionals. Part of that again is our individual responsibility to reflect upon our own developmental and learning needs so that we continue to practice within our scope to ensure safe care.

What do you think are the biggest obstacles for nurses and midwives in applying professional standards, and how can these be overcome?

I think that there are opportunities for greater awareness and transparency about the Professional Standards. I think that sometimes it can be challenging for nurses and midwives to understand how they are applicable to their everyday practice, and unfortunately for some that awareness comes during a performance or clinical practice issue. The focus for all nurses and midwives is to provide the best possible care that they can. The standards are clear about what needs to be in place from an individual and from an organisational view to ensure that happens.

How can nurses and midwives find time to focus on professional standards at work?

It's important to find those opportunities to reflect on the Standards – team meetings, quality and safety projects that you might be involved with, educational opportunities. You can make those connections to the Standards in your work every day.

In a practical sense, it can be about what you notice and where you focus your attention. Notice when people do make a difference and behave in ways that demonstrate those values. Your yearly registration renewal is also a good time to reflect, and in your performance and development plans. The Standards can be a guide for your career and your continued learning.

Touching on mental health and how nurses and midwives can be uniquely impacted by the serious and complex nature of their roles, what is your advice regarding nurses and midwives taking care of themselves?

We all know that to be effective in our roles we need also to take care of ourselves. This can be challenging as we juggle work and life commitments. There are a number of Local Health Districts that have developed strategies to support a focus on self-care, which include exercise programs, mindfulness and access to workplace support such as the EAP.

As nurses we work predominately as part of a team, so another important aspect of self-care is about how we look after each other and how the workplace supports us. We also can't underestimate the impact of how we work together day-to-day, simple things like ensuring that we take our breaks, that we check in with each other to see how the day is going, and importantly noticing and providing feedback to each other.

What are the key projects or messages you would like to share with our readers?

We currently have a strong focus on supporting the midwifery and nursing workforce. The Nursing and Midwifery Office provide a range of scholarships to support that, as well as leadership development for Nursing/Midwifery Unit Managers and Nursing/Midwifery Managers. We have a particular focus on developing the Midwifery Workforce, and as part of that we are leading a research project, using Appreciative Inquiry to understand the experience of midwifery students and midwifery staff in supporting undergraduate and post graduate midwifery students.

Mental health nursing is one area of focus for us, specifically the observation and engagement policy. We have also continued the implementation of the Productive Mental Health Ward program.

The Essentials of Care program has just marked its 10 year anniversary. I think the strong thing about this program is the voice it has given to nurses about their practice and how it has contributed to developing some great leaders in the profession.

For those looking at ongoing professional development, there are many opportunities for scholarships and details are available on our website:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing/scholarship/Pages/default.aspx



Case study: Two deaths when standards not upheld

- From Annmaree Nicholls, Professional Officer

This is one of the saddest cases I've ever witnessed. A nurse had been occasionally showing up to work clearly under the influence of alcohol. She had a turbulent home life and abusive marriage.

She was beloved by her nursing colleagues who often looked out for her in regard to picking up her slack at work, covering for her mistakes, and sometimes even putting her to sleep in a spare hospital bed or quietly sending her home when she was too drunk to complete her shift.

This went on for an extended number of years and the intoxicated presentations to work increased. The cover up continued.

One day she came to work intoxicated and made a significant medication administration error that caused a patient's death.

Her impaired condition and alcohol problem could no longer be hidden and came to light in the worst of circumstances.

Her employer reported a complaint for the medication error, impairment and patient death. A number of organisations were involved, including the Nursing & Midwifery Council, who quickly called an urgent hearing to determine the risk to public, herself and her colleagues and what would be required to manage that risk. The Council determined that she could not safely practice in her current state and they placed restrictions on her registration to protect the public and the practitioner.

At the Council hearing she appeared jaundiced, was clearly unwell and this was likely due to years of alcohol abuse. Sadly, she passed away shortly after from her illness.

Could her untimely death have been prevented? Could she have recovered and lead a healthy life, possibly to return to practice? Could the patient's death have been prevented?

We cannot know whether any individual's or organisation's earlier intervention could have saved this nurse and her patient. However we can imagine that this case may have turned out differently with interventions, such as if her health concerns had been reported much earlier as required of her nurse colleagues.

All registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses are mandatory reporters under mandatory notification law, and must make a report any time they reasonably believe that a registered colleague is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It isn't enough to just make a report to the employer or HR department; the notifier must ensure that the report reaches the regulator.

And as registered health practitioners, we all commit to upholding the standards:

The registered nurse or midwife considers and responds in a timely manner to the health and wellbeing of self and others in relation to the capability for practice. [3.1/3.8]

The enrolled nurse "promotes the safety of self and others in all aspects of nursing practice." [3.9]

In this sad case, the standards weren't upheld when the nurse failed to consider her own health and wellbeing as part of her capability to practice, when her colleagues failed to respond to her diminished health and wellbeing, and when this lead to a collective failure to consider the dangers to the patient's health and wellbeing.

Good nursing practice isn't only about how we look after ourselves and our own fitness to practice, or how we look after our patients. It is also about how we look after our colleagues. Sometimes this means taking the difficult but important step of intervening early and making a mandatory notification for the sake of all involved.

Learning note: The Council manages such cases in a non-disciplinary fashion by ensuring the practitioner has appropriate treatment, monitoring this as necessary and ensuring the practitioner is supported and safe. In some serious cases, a period of not working is recommended to allow time for healing before a graded return to work. These conditions allow colleagues and health organisations to continue to support practitioners with an impairment.

Read more about mandatory notifications here:

<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines/Guidelines-for-mandatory-notifications.aspx>

Read the Standards for Practice here:

<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines-statements/professional-standards/registered-nurse-standards-for-practice.aspx>



NMC News and Events

The Nursing & Midwifery Council partnered with the Mid North Coast Local Health District to deliver a multi-site educational roadshow in Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie on 15-17 October 2018. Deputy Executive Officer Kim Bryant and Professional Officer Annmaree Nicholls presented about patient safety and upholding professional standards to more than 165 registered and enrolled nurses and midwives. Would you like to know more about us, professional standards and how complaints are handled? Email us to discuss a visit from our team: newsletter@nursingandmidwiferycouncil.nsw.gov.au

Photo: Deputy Executive Officer Kim Bryant (r) and Professional Officer Annmaree Nicholls (l) donned scrubs in order to meet busy perioperative nurses during their lunchbreak for a session on professional standards.



Culturally Safe Health Care

In October our Council members and staff attended a workshop by CATSINaM on enabling culturally safe health care. We developed our understanding of cultural respect and cultural safety. We learned self-reflective practices that increase our capacity to contribute to culturally safe experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and colleagues. We also learned to recognise factors that underpin health inequities.

If you would like to learn more about addressing the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, visit www.catsinam.org.au and view this user guide from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care: <http://nationalstandards.safetyandquality.gov.au/topic/user-guide-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health>

Photo: Kathleen Stacey (left), Managing Director of Beyond..., and Janine Mohamed (right), CEO of CATSINaM, presented to Nursing & Midwifery Council members and staff about culturally safe health care.

International Event: Mental Health Nursing Conference in QLD

Council Deputy President Dr Bethne Hart presented on “Safe cultures of care: Rights and reckonings” at the 44th International Mental Health Nursing Conference on 24-26 October in Cairns, Queensland. Her paper identified common variables related to professional cultures and nursing practices in mental health care.

International Event: INRC 2018, USA

On 22-23 October, Council member Dr Kate Cheney attended the 2018 International Nurse Regulator Collaborative Symposium (INRC) held in Chicago USA, followed by the NCSBN Scientific Symposium on 24 October. The Symposium provided the opportunity for nurse regulators throughout the world to meet in order to explore and discuss regulatory risks in a changing environment.



Research Symposium: Decision Making

On 21 November we hosted a symposium to share two original research projects about regulatory decision-making.

Dr Margaret Cooke (*pictured, left*) presented about the risk-related variables which predict consistency in regulatory decision-making. Prof Mary Chiarella (*pictured, right*) described how regulators assess the level of insight and future risk of practitioners, following a reported concern about performance. The research is available here: [https://www.collegianjournal.com/article/S1322-7696\(18\)30091-X/fulltext](https://www.collegianjournal.com/article/S1322-7696(18)30091-X/fulltext)

Do you want to improve how you communicate risk and share decisions in your workplace? See these short videos from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/communicatingrisk/>

International Event: CLEAR Conference, NZ

On November 29-30, Council member Karen Hay and Executive Officer Margaret Cooke attended a symposium by the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation (CLEAR) about measuring and reporting regulatory performance.

The symposium examined the approaches taken by professional regulators to demonstrate that they are serving the public, and how regulators can understand the larger influence they have on the community with their work.



Topics of Interest

Podcast: Your mental health matters

Looking after your mental health is a major component of self care.

To learn about important elements for maintaining mental health, listen to the podcast “Your Mental Health Matters” by Nurse & Midwife Support, featuring interviews with a nurse/ midwife and mental health nurse.

<https://www.nmsupport.org.au/news/podcast-2-mental-health-matters>

New standards for aged care services

Aged care services will be assessed against the new Aged Care Quality Standards from 1 July 2019. View the new standards in the *Quality of Care Amendment (Single Quality Framework) Principles 2018*. Meanwhile, assessment and monitoring against the current standards will continue until 30 June 2019.

For more: <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/quality/aged-care-quality-standards>

Maternal vaccines: Can we do more?

Learn about vaccination during pregnancy with a free online module by COORDINARE (the South Eastern NSW Primary Health Network). It is accredited for nurses and midwives and offers 2 hours of CPD. <https://www.coordinare.org.au/news/maternal-vaccines-can-we-do-more/>

Midwives’ toolkit for helping with perinatal depression and anxiety

To help your patients deal with perinatal anxiety and depression, consider this information and a digital toolkit from PANDA. This year’s PANDA Week campaign was “I Wish I Knew,” aimed at supporting new parents who may not be coping well with the challenges of parenthood. Get the toolkit at <https://www.panda.org.au/awareness/your-panda-digital-toolkit> and more information at: <https://www.panda.org.au/awareness/panda-week>

Midwives’ module for gestational diabetes, which is on the rise

November 14 was World Diabetes Day. Diabetes is the leading cause of heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and lower limb amputation. Despite its prevalence, 1 in 5 health professionals do not receive any postgraduate training in diabetes.

(Source: <https://www.worlddiabetesday.org/>)

Gestational diabetes is the fastest growing type of diabetes in Australia, affecting thousands of pregnant women. (Source: <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/gestational-diabetes>)

The Australian College of Midwives offers a relevant webinar for their members, “Upskilling midwives on diabetes in pregnancy”. Get it here:

<https://learn.midwives.org.au/moodle/course/index.php?categoryid=18>

Changes to Register of Practitioners

Changes to the national Register of Practitioners will make it easier to access public information about health practitioners across Australia. For more information, visit:

<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/News/2018-10-29-media-release-National-register.aspx>