



## **HOLISTIC NURSING STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **About the Canadian Holistic Nurses Association (CHNA)**

Founded in 1986, the Canadian Holistic Nurses Association (CHNA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advocacy and advancement of Holistic Nursing practice in Canada and worldwide. Members of CHNA are nurses, Allied Health Professionals and other individuals interested in holistic care that embraces whole health and healthy environments.

The Canadian Holistic Nurses Association advocates for the advancement of Holistic Nursing practice through the establishment of standards of practice, continuing educational opportunities, promoting the rights of nurses to practice holistic care in various settings, public access to holistic nursing services, community involvement, and research.

### **Function and Purpose of the Standards for Holistic Nursing Practice**

Nursing Standards are authoritative statements that contribute to public protection by articulating the minimal professional conduct or practice expectations of all nurses regardless of their role, job descriptions or area of practice. Standards function to promote, guide, direct and regulate professional practice (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2018).

The Canadian Holistic Nurses Association (CHNA) Holistic Nursing Standards of Practice are specific to the specialty of Holistic Nursing and serve to augment provincial/territorial standards of practice for registered nurses. It is expected that holistic nurses adhere to standards of practice as mandated by their respective regulatory body's, as well as the current Canadian Nurses Association's (CNA) Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses.

The Canadian Holistic Nurses Association (CHNA) Holistic Nursing Standards of Practice reflect the most current holistic nursing research, education and philosophical beliefs and practices, and serve to:

1. delineate the uniqueness and scope of holistic nursing practice for all settings where holistic nursing is practiced.
2. facilitate evaluation of holistic nursing practice.
3. provide a framework of reference for clients and the public in relation to expectations and ethical consideration as they pertain to holistic nursing practice.
4. reflect the evolution and support of conceptual frameworks that explain holistic therapies.

5. facilitate articulation of holistic nursing practice and its methods to clients and health professionals.
6. provide guidance to assist nurses in their self-development and continuing competence as holistic nurses.
7. provide guidance to assist nurses in decision-making when addressing professional practice issues.

## **Goal of Holistic Nursing**

Holistic nursing is a way of being that recognizes and honors the mind-body-spirit-environment connection. Holistic nursing focuses on whole health and well-being for the nurse, client and the planet. Holistic nursing recognizing the nurse as an instrument of healing or facilitator in the healing process.

Holistic nursing requires that the nurse engage in reflective practice and demonstrate self-responsibility by fostering self-care, self-development, self-awareness and self-healing practices into one's own life.

## **Philosophical Principles of Holistic Nursing**

### **Healing & Health**

- 1) Human beings are composed of an internal and external environment, and healing can occur at any level including; physical, cognitive, emotional, social, environmental and spiritual.
- 2) Therapies offered include conventional allopathic techniques, complementary/alternative therapies and the integration of these two types of therapies as appropriate.
- 3) We acknowledge the complexity of the whole-person-system and take into consideration the ways in which experiences, relationships, community, culture, beliefs, values, environment(s) affect the health and well-being of the individual.
- 4) Practices can be offered for individuals, groups and communities to foster healing.
- 5) Health is seen as more than the absence of disease and encompasses balance, harmony, right relationship (between the whole); and, an improvement in one's well-being.
- 6) Healing is multidimensional, can happen without curing and can occur at any level of the human-energetic level.
- 7) Illness and disease are a part of life and are seen as a teacher and an opportunity for self-awareness and growth.
- 8) Healing is experienced and defined by the individual.

### **Self-Reflection, Self-Development and Self-Care**

- 9) Holistic nurses engage in self-reflection, self-development and self-care because they value themselves and their role as role-models and facilitators of healing for self, others and the planet.
- 10) Self-development includes self-assessment, self-reflection, self-care, and healing: a turning inward, as a way to develop self-awareness while examining one's beliefs, values, thoughts, feelings, behaviors and inner wisdom.

### **Relationship-Based Care**

- 11) Holistic nurses co-create a therapeutic alliance between practitioner and client, with the nurse being part of the healing environment.
- 12) Holistic nurses utilize therapeutic use of self by engaging in deep listening and holding space with clients to facilitate reflection and growth.

### **Person-Centred**

- 13) Human beings are the authority in their care, have the right to information about their health and have the capacity to participate knowingly in change, and can advocate on behalf of self.
- 14) Human beings should have access to complementary and integrative practices and practitioners, with all healthcare professionals striving towards interprofessional collaboration.
- 15) Human beings have the innate capacity for healing and well-being.

### **Research & Evidence**

- 16) Interventions used are an expression of praxis based on evolving theories, and all therapies are based in or informed by evidence.

### **Environment**

- 17) Environment comprises both animate and inanimate objects, such as: physical, social, psychological, cultural, spiritual, climate and energetic patterns.
- 18) Healthy environments include conditions that foster health and well-being both internally and externally.
- 19) Environment includes many factors from one's external surroundings, such as temperature, freedom from harm and energy patterns to other interacting factors such as safety, security, and exposure to violence.

## **Standards of Practice**

The Holistic Registered Nurse (HRN) is personally responsible and accountable for ensuring that holistic nursing practice and conduct meet the standards of the RN profession and the legislative requirements in the province or territory in which the holistic nurse is licensed to practice.

The following Holistic Nursing Practice Standards are a reflection of the five Core Values of Holistic Nursing Practice as identified by the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA, 2019), and the American Nurses Association (ANA, 2019):

### **Core Values of Holistic Nursing Practice**

- 1) Holistic Philosophy and Education
- 2) Holistic Ethics, Theories, and Research
- 3) Holistic Nurse Self-Care
- 4) Holistic Communication, Therapeutic Environment and Cultural Competence
- 5) Holistic Caring Process

### **1) Holistic Philosophies, Theories, and Ethics**

The Holistic Registered Nurse (HRN) upholds this standard by:

- a. engaging in practice based upon scientific foundations (theory, research, evidence-based/informed; reflection and critical thinking) and art (creativity, intuition, presence, caring, communication and relationship).
- b. engaging in practice grounded in nursing knowledge, skill, and theory (e.g. Theory of Human Caring and Caring Science; Science of Unitary Human Beings; Health as Expanding Consciousness; Theory of Integral Nursing; etc.)
- c. incorporating nursing theory along with other scientific theories, philosophies and perspectives that incorporate wholeness and healing (e.g. K. Wilber's Integral Theory; Chaos Theory; Energy Field Theory; etc.).



- d. recognizing individuals as authorities of their own health experience with the HRN acting as an ‘option-giver’.
- e. performing a holistic assessment assisting the individual in ascertaining meaning in the findings.
- f. acting as a partner and option-giver, respecting the individual’s personal choices, honouring the process of co-creating vs compliance.
- g. honouring the narratives as a way of understanding the individual’s situation.
- h. honouring the belief that individuals have innate healing capabilities with the HRN being the facilitator of the healing process.
- i. honouring the belief that all things are connected; thus, all actions affect all of humanity.
- j. honouring the sacredness of oneself and of all of nature.
- k. honouring the personal and collective responsibility of caring for body-mind-spirit and the planet
- l. honouring a professional ethic of caring and healing with the intent to preserve wholeness and dignity of self and others.

## **2) Holistic Nurse Self-Reflection, Self-Development, and Self-Care**

The Holistic Registered Nurse (HRN) upholds this standard by:

- a. engaging in self-assessment, personal development and conscious empowerment.
- b. engaging in a practice of ongoing self-care that addresses and alleviates moral distress and compassion fatigue
- c. creating an internal healing environment that promotes stress-reduction.
- d. recognizing self- reflection, self-development and self-care as significant requirements of being an HRN.
- e. recognizing the importance of enhanced self-awareness and its role in becoming more authentic and mindful.
- f. honoring self-care and self-reflection as self-responsibility.
- g. reflecting inwards to recognize beliefs, values, feelings, judgements, perceptions and sensations that may affect their actions and the care they provide.
- h. learning about healing from within, identifying their own strengths and limitations
- i. taking action to mobilize necessary resources to integrate self-care, self-healing, and self-responsibility into their own lives, including the implementation of self-healing practices such as yoga, exercise, whole nutrition, biological-based therapies, manipulative and body-based therapies, energy therapies, creativity, supportive communities, and self-assessment and lifelong learning.
- j. striving to achieve harmony and balance in their own lives.
- k. acknowledging that HRN’s can advocate for the creation of and implementation of self-care programs to improve the health and well-being for self, clients, healthcare settings, community, and the globe.

### **3) Holistic Caring Process**

The Holistic Registered Nurse (HRN) upholds this standard by:

- a. recognizing the interconnectedness of body, mind, emotion, spirit, and environment.
- b. considering complementary and integrative approaches to care, such as: healing touch, therapeutic touch, cognitive restructuring, visualization and guided imagery, hypnotherapy, aromatherapy, stress-management, Heart Math, and others.
- c. partnering with clients while implementing the 6-step holistic nursing process (1- assessing; 2- diagnosing or identifying patterns/challenges/needs/health issue(s); 3- identifying outcomes; 4- planning care; 5- implementing the plan of care; and, 6- evaluating) with individuals across the lifespan in all settings.
- d. acknowledging that HRN's assume a variety of roles, such as consultant, change agent, researcher, advocate, facilitator of healing, coach, educator.
- e. acknowledging that holistic assessments include physical, functional, psychological, mental, emotional, cultural, sexual, spiritual, transpersonal, and energetic assessments of the whole person.
- f. detaching selves from the outcomes or the need to fix the client; rather, collaborating with clients and guiding them to utilize their inner strengths, wisdom and resources throughout the healing process.

### **4) Holistic Communication, Therapeutic Relationship, Healing Environments and Cultural Care**

The Holistic Registered Nurse upholds this standard by:

- a. creating a therapeutic relationship through holistic communication skills.
- b. creating optimal healing environments that value support, holism, caring and the integration of complementary and alternative approaches.
- c. creating a safe and brave space in which the client is able to share their needs and concerns, acknowledging and supporting the unique needs of vulnerable populations
- d. calling forth full-use-of-self while interacting with others.
- e. recognizing that full-use-of-self includes applying skills such as coaching and consulting and a solution-focused approach with individuals and in groups, to assist others in gaining enhanced self-awareness.
- f. acknowledging that suffering, illness, and disease are natural processes from which clients can learn about themselves and patterns of healing.
- g. recognizing self as an instrument of healing.
- h. honouring the nurse's and clients' culture, beliefs and values and how these influence a person's concept of illness and disease.

### **5) Holistic Education and Research**

The Holistic Registered Nurse (HRN) upholds this standard by:

- a. committing to continued education in holistic nursing.
- b. gaining an understanding of complementary and alternative practices, in addition to conventional medicine.
- c. gaining a wide understanding of various cultural norms and healthcare practices.
- d. engaging in health promotion and disease prevention through comprehensive health counselling and coaching, the use of behavioral change models, and by providing access to resources and information.
- e. acknowledging various perspectives offered through science, intuition, introspection, culture, customs, and creativity.
- f. incorporating many ways of knowing (empirical; aesthetic; personal; ethical).
- g. offering guidance and support to individuals regarding conventional, biomedical and integrative healthcare choices.
- h. engaging in and developing evidence-based practice using research, practice guidelines, and expertise.
- i. recognizing that evidence-based practice integrates three main components: best available evidence; the client's wants and needs; and, the nurse's expertise

## Glossary

These definitions are derived from the American Holistic Nurses Association & American Nurses Association Holistic Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (2019; pp 226-231).

**Complementary/alternative/integrative modalities (CAMs):** a broad set of healthcare practices, therapies, and modalities that address the whole person-body, mind, emotion, spirit- rather than just signs and symptoms, which can replace or may be used as complements to conventional Western medical, surgical, and pharmacological treatments.

**Environment:** the context of habitat within which all living systems participate and interact, including the physical body and its physical habitat along with the cultural, psychological, social, and historical influences; includes both the external physical space and the person's internal physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual experience.

**Evidence-based practice:** the process by which integrative healthcare practitioners make clinical decisions using the best integrative philosophy and theories, research evidence, clinical expertise, and patient preferences within the context of available resources.

**Healing:** a lifelong journey into wholeness, seeking harmony, balance, and right relationship in one's own life and in family, community, and global relationships. Healing involves those physical, mental, social, and spiritual processes of recovery, repair, renewal, and transformation that increase wholeness and often (though not invariably) order and coherence. Healing is an emergent process of the whole system bringing together aspects of one's self and the body-mind-spirit-environment at deeper levels of inner knowing, leading towards integration and balance, with each aspect having equal importance and value. Healing can lead to more complex levels of personal understanding and meaning, and may be synchronous but synonymous with curing.

**Healing process:** a continual journey of change and evolution of one's self through life, characterized by the awareness of patterns that support or are challenges/barriers to health and healing; may be undertaken alone or in a healing community.

**Health:** an individually defined state or process in which the individual (nurse, client, family, group, or community) experiences a sense of well-being, harmony, and unity such that subjective experiences about health, health beliefs, and values are honored; a process of becoming and expanding consciousness.

**Holistic communication:** a caring-healing process that calls forth the full use of self in interacting with another. A free flow of verbal and nonverbal interchange between and among people and significant beings such as pets, nature, and God/Life Force/Absolute/Transcendent that explores meaning and ideas leading to mutual understanding and growth.

**Holistic ethics:** the basic underlying concept of the unity and integral wholeness of all people and of all nature, identified and pursued by finding unity and wholeness within the self and withing humanity. In this framework, acts are not performed for the sake of law, precedent, or social norms, but rather form a desire to do good freely in order to witness, identify, and contribute to unity.

**Holistic nurse:** a nurse who recognizes and integrates body-mind-emotion-spirit-energy-environment principles and modalities in daily life and clinical practice, creates a caring healing space within herself/himself that allows the nurse to be an instrument of healing, shares authenticity of unconditional presence that helps to remove the barriers to the healing process, facilitates another person's growth (body-mind-emotion-spirit-energy-environment connections), and assists with recovery from illness or transition to peaceful death.

**Holistic nursing process:** an iterative and integrative process involving six steps that may occur simultaneously: (1) assessing, (2) diagnosing or identifying patterns/challenges/needs/health issue(s), (3) identifying outcomes, (4) planning care, (5) implementing the plan of care, and (6) evaluating.

**Honor:** an act or intention indicating the holding of self or another in high respect, esteem, and dignity, including valuing and accepting the humanity of people, with regard for the decisions and wishes of another.

**Illness:** a subjective experience of symptoms and suffering to which the individual ascribes meaning and significance; not synonymous with disease; a shift in the homeodynamic balance of the person to disharmony and imbalance.

**Intention:** the conscious awareness of being in the present moment to help facilitate the healing process; a volitional act of love.

**Presence:** the essential state or core of healing; approaching an individual in a way that respects and honours his/his essence; relating in a way that reflects a quality of being with and in collaboration/partnership with rather than doing to; entering into a shared experience (or field of consciousness) that promotes healing potential and an experience of well-being.

**Spirituality:** the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for meaning. That which is generally considered sacred or holy. Usually, though not universally,

considered to involve a sense of connection with an absolute, imminent, or transcendent spiritual force, however named, as well as the conviction that meaning, value, direction, and purpose are valid aspects to the individual and universe. The essence of being and relatedness that permeates all of life and is manifested in one's knowing, doing and being. The interconnectedness with self, others, nature, and God/Life Force/ Absolute/Transcendent. Not necessarily synonymous with religion.

**Wellness:** integrated, congruent functioning aimed toward reaching one's highest potential.

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