



## Registered Nurses Assisting with Influenza Vaccine Clinics

Over the past few years, CRNPEI has received inquiries from Registered Nurses (RN) asking what they should know about giving influenza vaccines ***outside their regular workplace***. RNs were seeking guidance around maintaining their Standards of Nursing Practice while providing this service. Some of the scenarios asked about were: providing the vaccine to staff of an organization, office, or educational institution and were they able to provide vaccines to the office staff as well as the clients?

This sounds like an exciting opportunity to work in a collaborative way to provide care to your community. Before you begin there are several things to consider.

CRNPEI's mandate is to protect the public and to ensure safe competent registered nursing practice. Registered Nurses are vital health care providers who can administer vaccines and immunizations. Whether an RN is immunizing in a setting such as a public health clinic, doctor's office, occupational health service, or private agency, the RN often provides the leadership in developing and maintaining a high-quality program. All registered nurses are accountable to apply the CRNPEI Standards for Nursing Practice, ensure they have the competencies, and the authorization to administer the immunization.

### 1. Competencies and Processes to reflect on include:

#### Do you have the required competencies specific to giving the influenza vaccine?

CRNPEI standards for nursing practice must be adhered to at all times. For example, Standard 2- ***A Unique Body of Knowledge*** states each nurse must possess and continually strive to improve upon the specialized body of knowledge based on nursing science relative to the area of nursing practice.

In this case you must determine if you have the necessary knowledge, skills and judgement to safely administer the influenza vaccine to the client/population you will be serving.

These competencies include *but are not limited to:*

- Safe administration of the vaccine
- Knowledge of the scientific basics of the vaccine
- Essential vaccine practices and contextual issues relevant to the influenza vaccine

**Note:** Some clinics/organizations may require additional certifications or education related to the administration of the influenza vaccine. You should check with the

employer/organization for any additional required competencies, policies or procedures.

## **2. Employment: Who is your employer?**

What will your employment status be when you are giving the influenza vaccine? Will you be an employee of the pharmacy, pharmacist, private clinic, educational institution, or will you be considered an independent contractor?

Regardless of whether you are an employee of the physician/ pharmacist/ educational institution or you are considered an independent contractor you must think about having an employment contract.

“CRNPEI recommends you contact the Canadian Nurses Protective Society (1-800-267-3390) to discuss issues related to professional liability, professional liability protection, and their contract review services.”

CNPS professional liability protection is structured to protect individual eligible RNs from claims for professional liability arising from the provision of professional nursing services (e.g. administration of influenza vaccine). RNs who are independent contractors, however, may need other types of liability protection, in addition to the professional liability protection that is offered by CNPS. In particular, RNs who work as independent contractors may also incur general liability.

“General liability” refers to legal liability to a third party imposed by law for bodily injury and/or property damage arising from business operations. This may include claims for alleged damage RNs may inadvertently cause to the property or the premises used to provide their nursing services.

General liability coverage does not form part of the liability protection offered by CNPS. RNs who are working as independent contractors in influenza clinics are encouraged to make inquiries with the operator/owner of the clinic to confirm that they will be covered under the operator/owner’s general liability policy.

## **3. The order: Do you have a Physician or Nurse Practitioner order to administer the vaccine? How will you get the order for the vaccine?**

Registered Nurses can only administer vaccines when there is a direct order or medical directive written by an authorized prescriber, which in your case, is a physician/NP, or by following/using a medical directive.

You would need to determine if the physician/NP will see each patient and write an order, or if a medical directive can be developed in collaboration with the physician to enable you to use your knowledge, skills, and judgment to safely assess a client and administer the influenza vaccine. As with any authorizing mechanism (e.g. medical directives, direct orders, prescriptions, etc.), it remains the responsibility of the RN implementing the ordered procedure or intervention, to assess the client to determine whether the client conditions and situational circumstances identified in the directive have been met. In all cases, the RN should possess the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment to implement the directive safely. In the

event the RN does not carry out the order appropriately and the patient is harmed, the RN may be found liable.

#### **4. Informed Consent Obligations: What process is in place for you to obtain consent from the client?**

According to the PEI Consent To Treatment And Health Care Directives Act, and CRNPEI Standards for Nursing Practice, nurses are accountable for obtaining consent for the interventions they provide. Consent for influenza vaccination requires the following elements for a valid consent to treatment:

- (a) the consent must relate to the particular treatment; (e.g. Influenza vaccine)
- (b) the consent must be informed;
- (c) the consent must be given voluntarily;
- (d) the consent must not have been obtained through misrepresentation or fraud.

Consent is informed if, before giving it, the patient received the information that a reasonable person would require to understand the proposed treatment and to make a decision, including information about:

- (a) the condition for which the treatment is proposed;
- (b) the nature of the proposed treatment;
- (c) reasonable alternative treatments;
- (d) the material risks, expected benefits, likely effects and side effects of the proposed treatment and of alternative treatments including no treatment, that a reasonable person would expect to be told about, and the patient has an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers about the proposed treatment.

**Implied consent:** Consent to treatment and refusal of consent *may be expressed orally or in writing or may be inferred from conduct.*

The health care practitioner proposing the treatment is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that consent is obtained. In some cases, the nurse obtaining the informed consent may not be the nurse administering the vaccine. This is acceptable as long as the administering nurse reasonably believes that informed consent has been obtained before she/he provides the vaccination.

If the client is incapable of giving consent, the substitute decision-maker must provide consent. Consent can be written or oral. Nurses should document that consent was obtained, either by using a consent form or by recording it in the health record.

## 5. Record keeping requirements

Documentation of any patient care or service is essential to safe and effective nursing practice in all settings. The CRNPEI Standards for Nursing Practice apply to the administration of influenza vaccine. CRNPEI Standard 3, ***Competent Application of Knowledge*** states that the nurse must maintain clear, timely and accurate records of pertinent data.

### **Conclusion:**

Once you have determined:

- you have the required competencies
- your independent contract
- called CNPS
- and obtained an order (either for each individual or through a medical directive/policy/protocol); you may administer the influenza vaccine to staff and/or volunteers within the organization you are dealing with.

## References

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