

NURSE PRACTITIONERS Prescribing Methadone

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In New Brunswick, a nurse practitioner (NP) is a registered nurse who has completed a nurse practitioner program, (in primary health care or Family All Ages) and has advanced knowledge and clinical expertise. Within the competencies and standards established by the NANB Board of Directors, NPs have the authority to prescribe drugs and since September 2014, NPs have been prescribing controlled drugs and substances.¹

In 2012, federal regulations under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) authorized NPs to prescribe controlled drugs and substances, with the exception of cocoa leaves, heroin, opium, and anabolic steroids (excluding testosterone). Following the changes, NANB and the provincial Minister of Health, authorized NPs to prescribe controlled drugs and substances, but added two additional exceptions: cannabis and methadone.²

Seeing that NPs are the primary

care provider for thousands of New Brunswickers, and because of the current opioid crisis, NANB successfully obtained additional prescribing authority from the provincial minister of health for NPs to prescribe methadone for opioid dependency and methadone for pain. However, the NANB is not mandating that all NPs must seek federal exemption to prescribe methadone.

These changes are similar to NP practice in Newfoundland/Labrador, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

Prescribing Methadone

To prescribe methadone, NPs are subject to the *Government of Canada's Narcotic Control Regulations* subsection 53 (3), which requires practitioners to obtain a section 56 exemption under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA). Health Canada will issue exemptions to NPs to prescribe methadone upon recommendation from the

Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB).

NPs who have successfully completed the required learning and clinical practice expectations, as outlined by the NANB and who have received an exemption from Health Canada, will be authorized to prescribe methadone.

For additional information on the exemption process, please contact the NANB Practice Department.

At the time of print, NANB was awaiting the final approval from Health Canada for NPs in New Brunswick to apply for exemption to prescribe methadone. Once this final approval is received, NANB will communicate directly with NPs, their employers and other key stakeholders.

¹ The NANB required all NPs in New Brunswick to complete additional education regarding controlled drugs and substances, in order to renew NP registration for the 2015 practice year.

² The prescribing authority for NPs in New Brunswick can be found in the *Schedules for Ordering for Nurse Practitioners* - in Appendix 2 of the document *Standards for the Practice of Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners* (NANB, 2017).