

## YOU'VE ASKED

### *Are complementary therapies considered nursing practice?*

Complementary therapies can be defined as “non-traditional” interventions used for health promotion and therapeutic treatment i.e. therapeutic touch, reflexology, visualisation. The list of what is considered to be complementary and alternative medicine changes continually, as those therapies that are proven to be safe and effective become adopted into conventional healthcare and as new approaches to healthcare emerge. (CPSA)

RNs or NPs may legally offer service that fall within the practice of nursing, as defined by the *Nurses Act*, and which does not infringe upon the legislated exclusive practice of another health discipline. To practise as a registered nurse or a nurse practitioner in New Brunswick and to use the title RN or NP, an individual’s name must appear on the Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) register.

A member may only use the title RN/ NP and accrue hours of nursing practice for the purpose of registration when providing activities recognized as the practice of nursing.

It is not enough to say that because an RN/NP is employed in a particular position or role that the service being offered is nursing. Furthermore, the fact that nursing knowledge helps to inform or deliver a particular service or type of work does not mean that the practice is registered nursing. Complementary therapies are not usually taught in basic nursing programs, are not specific to any one discipline and are often offered by individuals who are not health care

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professionals. By themselves, complementary therapies do not constitute nursing practice. It is when complementary therapies are performed within the context of the nursing process that they fall within the realm of nursing practice. As an example, an employer may ask RNs in a palliative care department to offer therapeutic touch as a modality to help relieve pain. This would be supported by policy in the organization

and the RNs in the department would be required to receive education and training to develop competence in this intervention.

After assessing clients, RNs on the unit can then incorporate therapeutic touch as part of the plan of care for appropriate clients and it would be provided as part of the overall plan of nursing care for those clients. *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses* would need to be met and the treatment would be documented in the same manner as other nursing activities.

While there are many types of complementary therapies that are of value and benefit to the public, the determination of what constitutes nursing practice rests with the Nurses Association of New Brunswick. For information about what constitutes nursing practice, contact NANB at 1-800-442-4417 or by email at nanb@nanb.nb.ca.

#### **NANB Resources**

- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2012). *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses*. Fredericton: Author. [www.nanb.nb.ca/media/resource/NANB-StandardsOfPractice-RegisteredNurses-2012-E.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/media/resource/NANB-StandardsOfPractice-RegisteredNurses-2012-E.pdf)
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2015). *Guidelines for Self-employed Registered Nurses*. Fredericton: Author. [www.nanb.nb.ca/media/resource/NANB-GuidelinesSelfEmployedRNs-E.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/media/resource/NANB-GuidelinesSelfEmployedRNs-E.pdf)