



**PROFESSIONAL
CODE OF ETHICS**

of the

College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba

**Approved at
C.R.P.N.M. Annual General Meeting**

April 10, 1999

PREAMBLE

Registered Psychiatric Nurses are licensed professionals who practice within multiple settings and who utilize clinical, educational and/or administrative interventions that require complex skill-sets. Interventions range from mental health promotion to tertiary services with individuals, families, groups and communities.

Psychiatric nursing is guided by a set of values and beliefs that are included in the Professional Code of Ethics. Laying a foundation for the diverse and varied practices in which Registered Psychiatric Nurses are employed, this Code of Ethics reflects the changing world we live in and the dynamic nature of the profession. The Code of Ethics provides Registered Psychiatric Nurses with direction for ethical decision-making in an increasingly complex world.

At the core of psychiatric nursing practice is the therapeutic relationship between the client (individual, family, group and/or community) and the individual Registered Psychiatric Nurse. Establishing and maintaining a professional therapeutic relationship is the responsibility of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse, not the client, and every act or behaviour of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse must benefit the client. Above all, the Professional Code of Ethics is designed to provide guidance to protect the integrity of the therapeutic relationship.

VALUES

The values outlined in the Code of Ethics are based on what Registered Psychiatric Nurses care about in therapeutic relationships with their clients.

- Dignity
- Autonomy
- Trust
- Professionalism

DIGNITY

While providing psychiatric nursing care, the Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

demonstrates regard for the total well-being and uniqueness of the client and assists them to attain their optimum level of health and well-being;

considers the rights, needs, values and choices of the client within the biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual domains of health.

AUTONOMY

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse fosters independence in clients by:

demonstrating respect for the right of choice and personal freedoms held by clients and acknowledging that clients are partners in the decision-making process;

assisting clients to access information to make informed judgments about their care and enabling them to act on their own behalf in meeting their health goals;

upholding the competent person's legal and moral right to refuse treatment and to choose to live at risk, as long as those decisions are in keeping with the law; and

providing opportunities for individuals of diminished competence to make choices about aspects of their lives for which they maintain the capacity to make decisions.

TRUST

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse builds trust as part of the therapeutic relationship and:

holds in confidence all personal information entrusted to him/her by using professional judgment in sharing that which is deemed essential for the provision of comprehensive care;

informs clients whenever possible, and at the outset of the relationship, of the circumstances under which confidential information may be disclosed without consent; and

advocates the basic premise that the psychiatric nurse-client relationship is therapeutic and based on the needs of the client. This relationship is based on trust, respect, empathy and power. Any act of abuse or neglect by the Registered Psychiatric Nurse -- whether it be sexual, physical, verbal, emotional or financial -- is a betrayal of this relationship. Since the care provided is to do good and to do no harm, the Registered Psychiatric Nurse cannot use unintentional harm as a defense if they knew, or ought to have known, that the act or behaviour could cause harm to the client.

PROFESSIONALISM

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse upholds an attitude and conduct that portrays self-respect and pride in the profession, and also:

(with clients...)

safeguards and protects the client, by taking preventive as well as corrective action, when the client's care, welfare and safety are compromised by incompetent, unethical and/or illegal conduct on the part of any person;

(with colleagues...)

sustains the good reputation of co-workers, team members and the Psychiatric Nursing profession;

reports to the appropriate authorities and to the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba any incompetent or unethical behaviour of associates, while guarding against petty or trivial accusations;

(with change and growth within the profession...)

participates in the efforts of the profession to develop, maintain, monitor, and review the Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice and Psychiatric Nursing education, as legislated under the current Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act;

(with ongoing education/professional competency...)

maintains professional competency in their area of practice through continued education opportunities;

honours requests for consultation from other Registered Psychiatric Nurses and health care professionals and assists peers and subordinates to develop professional competence;

recognizes individual colleagues' expertise and limitations and utilizes professional judgment when accepting and delegating responsibilities;

contributes, where possible, to the ongoing development of the profession's body of knowledge. When involved in research, investigation and/or publishing, the Registered Psychiatric Nurse adheres to the currently accepted Research Code of Ethics; and

refrains from permitting their name along with professional credentials to be used in connection with the endorsement of commercial products.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abuse: Within the context of a professional-client relationship, abuse is the misuse of power or the betrayal of trust, respect or intimacy between the Psychiatric Nurse and the client that the nurse knows that can cause or be reasonably expected to cause, physical or emotional harm to a client.¹

Autonomy: Refers to self-directing freedom and especially moral independence. The goal of all care and interventions is to aid in the empowerment of clients to their fullest capacity. Self-empowerment for the client is a process designed to promote decision-making capabilities and to equip individuals with a belief in their autonomy, together with the skills necessary to enable them to decide what to do about their own health, their family's health and the health of the community.²

Integrity: Adherence to a code of moral values; the quality or state of being whole, congruent and complete.

Mental Health Promotion: is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to take control over their lives and to improve their mental health. Mental health promotion uses strategies that foster supportive environments and individual resilience, while showing respect for the equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.³

Power: Registered Psychiatric Nurses often perceive themselves as allies of the client because of their responsibility to act as advocates for clients. At its core, however, the psychiatric nurse-client relationship is one of unequal power, in which the psychiatric nurse has authority, knowledge, access to privileged information, and influence. Regardless of the nature and context of the therapeutic relationship, and whether or not the Registered Psychiatric Nurse is the primary or secondary caregiver, these components are present.⁴

Professionalism: Involves commitment to the profession of psychiatric nursing and its skills, rather to any particular setting or organization. Implies adherence as a member in good standing with the registering body (Registered Psychiatric Nurses' Association of Manitoba) and subscribing to its Code of Ethics, Standards, and legislation. The upgrading of professional skills to increase expertise is continued throughout a career in Psychiatric Nursing. For a "professional", work is a component of a career plan and an integral part of the person's being. Involvement, motivation and commitment are separate components of the individual Registered Psychiatric Nurse's sense of vocation.⁵

¹**Nurse-Client Relationships: A Discussion Paper on Preventing Abuse of Clients and the Expectations for Professional Behaviour.** (1995). Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia, British Columbia Council of Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of British Columbia.

²Nutbaum, D., (1986) **Health Promotion Glossary** in International Journal of Health Promotion, vol. 1, p. 113-127.

³**Centre for Health Promotion.** (1997). Proceedings from the International Workshop on Mental Health Promotion. University of Toronto.

⁴Ibid. Nurse-Client Relationships. (1995). British Columbia.

⁵Epps, J. (1998) Debunking the Promotion Myth: Finding a Destination for the Career Path, in **Edges**, vol. 10,(3) and Leddy, S. & Pepper, J.M., (1989). Conceptual Bases of Professional Nursing, (2nd. ed.). J.B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia.