

NH Board of Nursing

Position Statement and Clinical Practice Advisories Regarding the Role of the Registered Nurse (RN) in Needle Decompression for Tension Pneumothorax

The Practice and Education (P & E) Committee has carefully considered the issue of registered nurses performing needle decompression for the treatment of tension pneumothorax. Pursuant to 405.01, appropriate training and competency is a requirement for performing nurse care. Based upon this review, the P & E Committee advises that it is within the RN scope of practice provided the following are met:

A. RN has satisfactorily completed nationally recognized course suitable to patient population.

Course of Instruction:

1. Anatomy and physiology of pulmonary system and chest wall, pharmacological management and patient assessment for tension pneumothorax, and didactic and classroom instruction followed by supervised clinical practice required for needle decompression.
2. Indications and contraindications for needle decompression, including but not limited to preparation of patient, equipment set-up and maintenance.
3. Safety measures and management of potential complications and unexpected outcomes, including use of advanced airway devices.
4. Indications and contraindications for selection of appropriate needle for patient's age and size.
5. Verification procedures to ensure proper placement.
6. Nursing care responsibilities and age specific management of patient

B. Documentation of satisfactory completion of instructional program and demonstrated clinical proficiency on file with employer.

C. Employer maintains written policy, which allows nurse to perform procedure, and specifies method for education and minimum of annual re-demonstration of skill.