

3

The specialist competency framework for outpatient nurses

Developing e-planning, providing and evaluating specific interventions, treatments and therapies

Core competency 1: Interacting and supporting patients in OPD

| Competent nurse | Experienced/proficient nurse | Senior practitioner/expert nurse |
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| Short interaction time with service user in OPD | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a good rapport with patients and carers within a short time span • be aware of differences in cultural, religious and spiritual needs and how to rapidly access services, such as translators • build a picture of, and account for the wider situation when assessing and relating to service users • be aware of the transient nature of the OPD and its impact on both service users and staff. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use knowledge and experience to raise awareness of the potential impact outpatient visits may have on patients and develop this skill in others • use knowledge and experience to raise awareness of the potential implications of cultural differences and how it can affect non-compliance, both to staff and patients. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use expertise to inform and develop evidence-based guidelines relevant to the transient nature of care provision in OPD. |
| Supporting the service user when the message is uncertain | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aware of the psychological impact an outpatient visit may have on the individual • develop a heightened awareness of the differences in social, cultural and religious factors that may affect the ability of service users to optimise health care services provided in outpatients, e.g. the need for chaperones. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use experience to improve care provided by the OPD team, and raise awareness of the potential impact outpatient visits may have on service users and carers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use expertise to support patients, carers and staff • develop and evaluate strategies for dealing with uncertainty. |

Core competency 2: Using diverse specialist interventions

| Competent nurse | Experienced/proficient nurse | Senior practitioner/expert nurse |
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| Diverse specialist interventions, health care and developmental needs of OPD service users | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use knowledge of anatomy and physiology of the body systems to deal effectively with multiple health problems • assess a wide range of patients who visit OPD using current evidence and the patient's own expertise • adjust assessment and history taking to the life span, gender and cultural and social background of the patient • monitor patients with a wide range of acute and chronic conditions • prescribe care for service users with a wide range of issues and problems who attend outpatient clinics • initiate interventions for those patients and evaluate the impact of the interventions • access additional information about a patient and know when, and to whom it is appropriate to communicate this information • seek supervision from a more experienced practitioner when needed. For example, when dealing with the vast array of complex issues that service users present with or when undertaking a new intervention • keep up-to-date with current clinical issues, particularly those that impact on outpatient services • contribute to, and build on the knowledge base in outpatients by bringing knowledge from other specialities to the department • be aware of other competency frameworks that are available and link to the specialities, i.e. day surgery, orthopaedics, dermatology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use expert knowledge of anatomy and physiology to engage with patients and explain any concerns that they may have • use experience to challenge the care practices in outpatient nursing • assimilate information gathered at assessment to provide the rationale for clinical decision-making • take responsibility for leading the team and supervise more inexperienced staff as needed • action potential implications of cultural differences, and be aware of how this can influence the choices of patients and the impact on staff • use experience to develop practice, based on available evidence • use experience to enable the use of expert knowledge from other disciplines • initiate and interpret a wide range of investigations in guidelines and protocols • use competency frameworks from linked specialities, i.e. day surgery, orthopaedics, dermatology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actively lead on the developments in OPD and use knowledge and expertise to develop and evaluate new evidence-based policies • continually evaluate the service provided in the department • use expertise and knowledge of outpatient care to inform other disciplines and staff groups • assess, prioritise, treat and safely refer to other departments or discharge patients into a nurse-led clinic • use knowledge to prescribe medication in line with current DH guidelines • use knowledge and expertise to model and promote sensitively the importance of cultural differences • use expertise to access information from within their area and across different settings. |

Core competency 3: Multi-skilled interventions

| Competent nurse | Experienced/proficient nurse | Senior practitioner/expert nurse |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop the knowledge and skills to be able to work in a range of clinic settings • assist with clinical procedures in clinics and support the patient throughout the procedure • ensure that patients are prepared for investigations in a holistic and patient-centred way • use the principles of informed and implied consent to maintain safe practice • can identify potential problems in the organisation of clinics, e.g. waiting times, and can take appropriate action with support from senior staff • recognise trigger points to aggressive and violent behaviour and deal with the initial management of such incidents until further support arrives • use competency frameworks from other specialist areas to enable safe practice in specialist clinics. For example, local policies and guidelines, and RCN frameworks already ratified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – dermatology – day surgery – diabetes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake a variety of procedures in the clinic environment • work autonomously in the clinic environment • teach, supervise and assess others in an outpatient setting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use expertise in outpatient care to be able to work across the department in any setting • use management expertise to be a troubleshooter across the department and ensure that the expertise is used to run an efficient patient-focused service. |