



## PATIENT CARE

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### TELEPHONE NURSING PRACTICE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1. **DEFINITION: Telephone Nursing Practice** (TNP) is based on the therapeutic nurse-client relationship and involves using a telephone to provide nursing care to clients at a distant location from the nurse.
- 1.2. Providing telephone advice is considered to be a high-risk activity because the nurse does not have face-to-face contact with the client, and the lack of a hands-on physical assessment of the client: the nurse must rely on the caller to provide complete and accurate information about health concerns. However, risk is reduced when the client is known to the nurse.

#### 2. OBJECTIVE:

- 2.1 To ensure that telephone nursing practice is provided by nurses at Hotel Dieu Hospital within a safe and therapeutic nurse-client interaction in accordance with the College of Nurses of Ontario Telephone Nursing Practice Standards, Principles of Confidentiality, and Nursing Documentation Standards.

#### 3. POLICY:

- 3.1 Hotel Dieu Hospital supports telephone nursing practice by the appropriate category of nurses<sup>3.1.1</sup> who have received education in telephone nursing practice<sup>3.1.3</sup>, to known callers only<sup>3.1.4</sup>, only in Clinical Areas which have determined that Telephone Nursing Practice is an essential/integral part of the care provided for this group of clients, and where protocols exist these will be used to guide practice.<sup>3.1.5</sup> (Protocol refers to clinical algorithm, guideline, or standardized interview tool).
  - 3.1.1 Normally, Registered Nurses (RNs) provide TNP.
    - 3.1.1.1. Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) provide TNP in situations where the needs of the caller are known, or where there is immediate access to colleagues or information resources.
  - 3.1.2 Nurses who provide TNP possess a current and in-depth knowledge base in the clinical area as well as expert communication skills.

- 3.1.3 Hotel Dieu Hospital will provide education in telephone nursing practice and communication skills to all nurses involved in telephone nursing practice, during general nursing orientation and during Clinical Area orientation.
  - 3.1.4 Known Callers: those callers who are registered in a Program or Service, and for whom an available health record exists. The Clinical Area will define a post-discharge period during which nurses can/will engage in TNP.
  - 3.1.5 Due to the diversity of specialized care provided to clients at Hotel Dieu Hospital, each Clinical Area will develop protocols to ensure that telephone nursing practice is guided by best practice principles and utilizes the nursing process to identify client needs, provide and evaluate care. Hotel Dieu Hospital supports the Nurse in using professional clinical judgment when varying from the protocol.
- 3.2 Unknown Callers are callers not currently registered in a program or service. Nurses at HDH will **not** provide specific treatment advice to unknown callers. According to the professional assessment of the nurse at the time of the call, unknown callers should be referred to 1) see their family doctor or 2) Telehealth Ontario @ 1-866-797-0000 for specific treatment advice or 3) advised to attend the Emergency Department. Hotel Dieu Hospital relies on the professional decision of the nurse in determining which of these referral options is appropriate.
- 3.2.1 The Chief Nursing Executive, in consultation with the Manager of the clinical area, may authorize specific clinical areas to engage in TNP with unknown callers.
    - 3.2.1.1 RNs assigned to clinical areas defined in Appendix A can provide telephone advice to unknown callers.
    - 3.2.1.2 RNs provide information, individualized to the needs of the caller that is available to the public through published disease management guidelines or patient education materials.
      - 3.2.1.1.1 RNs will not provide specific advice to alter medications or treatment regimes.
      - 3.2.1.1.2 Information may be given on how community resources can be accessed.
- 3.3 Hotel Dieu Hospital is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of all telephone nursing interactions, in compliance with Administrative Policy 920 (Confidentiality). This requires that the nurse have a quiet, private environment to conduct telephone interviews, and where it is possible to protect the client's health record from breaches of confidentiality.
- 3.4 Sufficient time must be provided to the nurse to engage in each nurse-patient interaction including the time that may be required for telephone follow-up and documentation.

- 3.5 To ensure that the multidisciplinary team is aware of all care provider-client interaction, all nurse-client telephone interaction must be documented in compliance with Telephone Nursing Practice documentation standards.
- 3.5.1 Documentation for known callers will be made in the health record. The nurse should use the protocols/documentation tools developed by the Clinical Area and approved by the HDH/KGH Joint Forms Committee.
- 3.5.2 Documentation for unknown callers will be made in a telephone log, which is maintained at the Clinical Area level and in compliance with CNO standards for TNP documentation.

**Reference Policy:**

Administrative Policy #920: Confidentiality

**Reference:**

College of Nurses of Ontario. (2004). Telephone Practice Guideline, Toronto, ON: Author

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Professional Practice Leader, Nursing

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Associate Executive Director, Patient Care  
and Chief Nursing Executive

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Date

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Date

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## Appendix A

Congestive Heart Failure Clinic

Diabetes Education Centre