

NEVADA STATE BOARD OF NURSING

Practice Decision

The Role of Registered Nurses in Management and/or Administration of Medications via Epidural or Intrathecal Catheter Routes

It is the opinion of the Nevada State Board of Nursing that it is within the scope of practice of a registered nurse to administer analgesic and anesthetic agents via the epidural or intrathecal routes for the purpose of pain control.

The Nevada State Board of Nursing notes that only licensed anesthesia care providers, as described by the American Society of Anesthesiologists and the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology, as authorized by applicable laws, should perform insertion and verification of epidural or intrathecal catheter placement. Consistent with state law, the qualified provider must order the drugs, dosages, and concentrations of medications to be administered to the patient through the catheter. These interventions are beyond the scope of the registered professional nurse.

Matters Considered

Current literature and trends support the role of the Registered Nurse in the management and administration of medications via epidural or intrathecal catheters. The care and management should be provided by Registered Nurses, who has completed additional training and has supervised clinical practice documented in their personnel file. Institutional policies shall be developed to cover these procedures.

In setting policies, consideration must be given to:

1. Competence of the individual registered nurse;
2. The acuity of the patients who will be recipients of the services;
3. Continued education required to improve theoretical knowledge base and skills;
4. Drugs that cause a local anesthetic effect are not included.

Guidelines for approval of a course for administration of epidural/intrathecal medication for the management of pain are:

1. General Provisions

- a. The epidural/intrathecal catheter must be placed by a qualified licensed provider who assumes responsibility for ensuring proper placement.
- b. The patient should be placed on monitoring equipment as dictated by the patient's condition (e.g., apnea and cardiac monitor, etc. as appropriate).
- c. The appropriate reversal agent should be readily available administered in accordance with appropriate provider's orders or agency protocol.
 - i. A crash cart should also be readily available.
- d. Only registered nurses who have completed the facility's structured instructional program and who have had supervised clinical practice will be allowed to administer epidural/intrathecal medications.

2. **Course of Instruction**

- a. Educational training should include, but is not limited to:
 - i. Anatomy and physiology of the spinal cord and column.
 - ii. Purpose of the epidural/intrathecal catheter for pain management.
 - iii. Catheter placement and signs and symptoms of misplacement of catheter.
 - iv. Effects of medication administered epidurally/intrathecally.
 - v. Untoward reaction to medications.
 - vi. Complications.
 - vii. Nursing care responsibilities:
 1. Observations
 2. Procedures
 3. Accountability
 - viii. Removal of Epidural Catheters
 1. Training should include review of the Nevada State Board of Nursing Practice Decision on the scope of practice for the registered nurse in the removal of epidural catheters.

3. **Documentation and Continued Competency**

- a. Documentation of satisfactory completion of the instruction and supervised practice should be placed in the registered nurse's personnel file.
- b. Organizations should have a competency validation mechanism that demonstrates the periodic evaluation of continued competency to manage the care of patients receiving analgesia by catheter.

References

- American Society of Anesthesiologist. (2023) Statement on the role of Registered Nurses in the management of continuous regional analgesia. <https://www.asahq.org/standards-and-practice-parameters/statement-on-the-role-of-registered-nurses-in-the-management-of-continuous-regional-analgesia>.
- Elliot, J., Fischer, M., Meloche, K., & Quinlan-Colwell, A. (2025). Nursing care of the patient with epidural analgesia. *Pain Management Nursing*, 26(2), 178-189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmn.2024.12.009>.
- Elliott, J., Fischer, M., Meloche, K., Quinlan-Colwell, A., & Reyburn-Orne, T. (2023). Registered nurse management and monitoring of analgesia by catheter techniques. *Pain Management Nursing*, 24(3), 246-247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmn.2023.02.002>.