

SANC POSITION STATEMENT ON THE USE OF TELE-HEALTH CONSULTATION BY PROFESSIONAL NURSE PRACTITIONERS

1. PREAMBLE

The South African Nursing Council (SANC) is mandated in terms of the Nursing Act, 2005 (Act No 33 of 2005) to regulate the nursing and midwifery professions by establishing and maintaining nursing education and training as well as practice standards. The SANC advocates for the public in matters concerning nursing by monitoring compliance with regulatory prescripts. The SANC is cognizant of the constant changing health service delivery environment, legislation and relevant policies that affect and impact on the nursing profession.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a change in the health service delivery environment. The Covid virus, unlike other previously known viruses such as the Flu and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), whose impact never affected the free mobility of human beings, has negatively impacted the Professional Nurses' ability to consult with their patients due to the lockdown restrictions, quarantine or isolation of either the patients or nurses due to infection or exposure to COVID-19. In view of the above and in the interest of continuity of care, the SANC resolved to consider virtual consultation of patients by Professional Nurses as an acceptable method of nursing care, that will ensure continuity of care, even in circumstances where physical contact between the Professional Nurse and patient is impossible.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the position statement is to provide guidance to Professional Nurse practitioners using virtual consultation to manage and treat their patients.



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3. DEFINITIONS

Professional Nurse practitioner is a person who is qualified and competent to independently practice comprehensive nursing in the manner and to the level prescribed, and who is capable of assuming responsibility and accountability for such practice.

Virtual consultation is a remote interaction between a patient and a treating health care professional that includes assessment using relevant devices, modes, media and diagnosis of health needs in order to provide the necessary nursing advice and treatment.

Tele-health is the use of digital information and communication technologies such as computers and mobile devices by healthcare professionals to consult and manage their patients remotely.

4. SANC POSITION

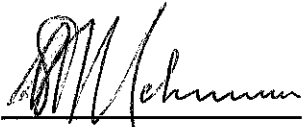
Professional Nurses with post basic diplomas/ additional qualifications and are registered as such by the South African Nursing Council are deemed competent to consult their patients virtually in the specialty that they are registered for, subject to the following conditions:

1. There must have already been an established nurse-patient relationship between the Professional Nurse and the patient.
2. The Professional Nurse must already have a reasonable understanding of the patient's condition and or chronic disease profile.
3. The patient must have been previously assessed, treated, and deemed stable for at least six months prior to the virtual consultation.
4. The virtual consultations are limited to only two sessions in six months.
5. The Professional Nurse practises within his/her scope of practice and adheres to the SANC Code of Ethics for Nurses and Midwives.
6. The nursing care provided virtually should benefit patients the same as nursing care provided during face-to-face consultation.

7. In cases where an emergency arises at any stage during the virtual consultation, the Professional nurse must stop the virtual consultation and refer the patient to the nearest health establishment for continuity of care.
8. A policy that outlines the virtual consultation be developed, to address amongst other key elements, patient profiling for suitability to consult virtually, record keeping and equipment necessary for effective virtual consultation.
9. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), appropriate for the discipline (e.g. mental health) and clinical setting, including but not limited to general, clinical, ethical, technical and administrative should be available. These should be reviewed every year or as often as it is necessary.
10. Complete, concise and accurate nursing records must be kept for all patients consulted.

For any queries or clarity-seeking questions, please direct to Ms J Muswede: Senior Manager: Professional Practice at email address jmuswede@sanc.co.za.

Yours Sincerely,



**S A MCHUNU (MS)
REGISTRAR AND CEO
S A NURSING COUNCIL**

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