

Clinical Nurse Specialists: Promoting a Healthy Michigan

Who Are Clinical Nurse Specialists?

Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) are registered nurses who have advanced education (at the masters and doctorate level) to provide expert comprehensive nursing care directly to patients, support and develop registered nurses at the point of care and serve as leaders in redesigning systems to improve access, quality and safety in a cost effective manner. The CNS improves patient care by putting the best evidence and innovations into practice. They help solve challenging patient care issues and monitor patient outcomes for clinical effectiveness.

How do Clinical Nurse Specialist Impact Access, Quality & Safety?

CNSs impact patient outcome by implementing innovations in care techniques, by reducing patient complications and by decreasing length of stay in hospitals (Wheeler, 1999, 2000). CNSs increase safety in patient care, such as reducing incidence of patient falls (Kilpack et al., 1991) and reducing incidence of catheter sepsis (Sutton et al., 2005). A recent study (Custer, 2010) reported about a CNS-led interdisciplinary team that developed standardized insulin orders and enacted system wide changes that improved patient mean glucose levels.

What Type of Services Do Clinical Nurse Specialist Provide?

Clinical Nurse Specialists provide healthcare services to patients and families in a variety of settings. CNSs are clinical experts in the diagnosis and treatment of illness and the delivery of evidence-based nursing interventions that focus on attaining health goals of patients and families. To prevent or treat illness, CNSs conduct comprehensive assessments, derive differential diagnoses, provide evidence-based care interventions, engage in health promotion activities to reduce risk behaviors, and influence public policy to improve outcomes.

The following is a list of examples of the services CNSs provide:

- Development & implementation of;
 - models for improving clinical outcomes and safety
 - models for eliminating unnecessary care
 - models for improving care for those with chronic illness
 - and solutions to reduce costs of care
- Comprehensive health histories and physical exams
- Diagnosis and treatment of acute problems such as infections and injuries
- Diagnosis, treatment and management of chronic problems such as asthma or diabetes
- Routine care such as prenatal, well child care, preventive adult care.
- Order and interpret lab tests, x-rays and other diagnostic studies.
- Preventive health guidance and counseling
- Referral to specialists for additional services as needed

Where Do Clinical Nurse Specialist Practice?

Clinical Nurse Specialist practice in variety of specialty areas including but not limited to: acute care hospitals, nurse managed clinics, school based practice, community based organizations, and private practice. From bedside to boardroom, CNSs are uniquely qualified to coach, mentor, and apply evidence-based clinical advice from a “big picture” point of view.



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The Michigan Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists is available as a consultant on healthcare issues, to provide expert testimony, and to support legislation or regulatory initiatives that improve health care systems for Michigan citizens.

References

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