

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF NURSES, MIDWIVES AND HEALTH TECHNICIANS

AIM

The following document describes the professional image of nurses, midwives and health technicians, which integrates the professional and personality-related image as well as visual appearance. Each individual representative of the professional group is expected to identify with it.

OBJECTIVE

With this elaborate overall image we aim to achieve a high level of professional competence and culture which will enable a safe and quality provision of health, nursing and midwifery care. Our aim is to contribute towards excellence, improved reputation and recognition of the profession in the field of the entire health care.

THE IMAGE OF THE NURSE, MIDWIFE AND HEALTH TECHNICIAN

The principal focus of the care provided by nurses, midwives and health technicians is THE PATIENT, unique and one of a kind in time and space and as such at the top of the system of values.

The core value of nurses, midwives and health technicians is THE CARE OF FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS. The fundamental principles of work are humanity, morality, ethics and professional competence.

Nurses and health technicians are bound by the Code of Ethics for Nurses and Nurse Assistants of Slovenia (Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, 2005).

Midwives are bound by the Code of Ethics for Midwives (Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, 2005).

The range of activities undertaken by nurses, midwives and health technicians **is based on "Professional Activity of Health Care and Midwifery Practice"** (Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia, 2008, 2010, 2011).

In accordance with **the Health Services Act (official consolidated text, Article 55)**, nurses, midwives and health technicians bear **ethical, professional, criminal and material accountability** for the work they carry out.

NURSE

Nurses are registered nurses (Bachelors of Science in Nursing) who have completed tertiary education in the field of nursing care, whereby the study course fully complied with the Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, and have been given permission to work independently in health care by a relevant authority.

Nurses are AN INTEGRAL PART of the health care system in the Republic of Slovenia.

Nurses are qualified professionals in the field of nursing and health care who approach individuals and groups holistically, autonomously take on duties and responsibilities within the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the health care system, welfare and education. They are independent professionals working as part of the nursing team, and are active members of the medical team which looks after the patient's health.*

According to the definition by the International Council of Nurses (ICN, 2010), the **PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY** of nursing care is as follows:

»autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings; nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people.«

Other key nursing roles are advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education.

***Nursing care** can independently also be practised by people with the following professional qualifications: SENs, health technicians, charge nurses, teachers of health education and nurses with tertiary qualifications.

MIDWIFE

Midwives are registered midwives (Bachelors of Midwifery) who have completed tertiary education in the field of midwifery care, whereby the study course fully complied with the Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, and have been given permission to work independently in health care by a relevant authority.

Midwives are AN INTEGRAL PART of the midwifery care in the Republic of Slovenia.

Midwives are qualified professionals in the field of midwifery and midwifery care who autonomously take on duties and responsibilities within the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the health care system and education. They are independent professional working as part of the midwifery and nursing team, and are active member of the medical team which looks after women's and children's health.*

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM, 2005) defines the **PRIMARY ROLE** of midwives as part of the midwifery practice as follows: a midwife **»gives the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct births on the midwife's own responsibility and to provide care for the newborn and the infant. This care includes preventative measures, the promotion of normal birth, the detection of complications in mother and child, the accessing of medical care or other appropriate assistance and the carrying out of emergency measures«.**

According to the international definition of the midwife, a midwife has an important task in health counselling and education, not only for the woman, but also within the family and the community. This work should involve antenatal education and preparation for parenthood and may extend to women's health, sexual or reproductive health and child care (ICM, 2005).

* In accordance with their professional qualifications, the midwifery practice can independently also be conducted by nurses – midwives (secondary school education), graduate/senior staff nurses/midwives, senior staff nurses specialized in midwifery care and midwives with university education in different study courses.

HEALTH TECHNICIANS

Health technicians have completed secondary professional educational programmes in the field of health care.

Health technicians ARE MEMBERS OF THE STAFF responsible for provision on health care* and nursing in the Republic of Slovenia.

Health technicians work with nurses and other professionals as part of the medical treatment provided to patients. In accordance with their professional qualifications they provide patients with care within the limits of their occupational activities.

THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY of health technicians is professional and responsible provision and participation in the health care of healthy, ill, disabled and dying people of all ages.

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- * Members of the health care team who have completed secondary professional health care study programmes: secondary nurses, health care technicians, secondary medical technicians.
 - ** In the field of dental care, work is carried out by dental assistants who have completed secondary professional educational programmes.
 - *** Nursing teams in the field of health and social security include care assistants who have completed vocational educational programmes.

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE NURSE

Nurses:

Nurses are independent and autonomous in their professional practice as registered nurses (Bachelors of Science in Nursing) in accordance with the fundamental responsibility and the relevant field of work. Nursing care is provided by adhering to the applicable professional principles, guidelines and standards, whereby patients are provided with the highest possible level of health care safety and quality.

One of the main values of nursing care is knowledge as a foundation for achieving objectives and professional development. Nurses should aim to pass their knowledge and experience on to other members of the nursing team and to others who are in the early stages of their educational process. Their work is based on the level of education attained as part of the undergraduate tertiary professional education and lifelong learning.

Specialist nurses:

Specialist nurses are independent and autonomous in their professional practice as registered/graduate nurses with **specialist knowledge** and also carry out certain activities handed over by doctors. In doing so, they apply a high level of critical thinking and skills and suitable clinical judgement. Their work is based on clinical specialization as a form of postgraduate nursing care education.

Nurses with a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN):

They are an integral part of systematic monitoring of clinical work and of the team management with the aim of improving clinical practice, as well as initiators of changes and improvements which are directly implemented into the health and nursing care process. They are also holders and/or performers of scientific-research activities in the field of health and nursing care, which involves active participation of members of the nursing and medical team. They are students' mentors and higher education teachers at the first level according to the Bologna Process. Their work is based on the second-level nursing care study programme in accordance with the Bologna Declaration.

Doctors of Nursing Practice (DNP):

They take on leading roles in defining and ensuring acceptable standards of clinical health care, research and education based on direct involvement in the health and nursing care process. They are

also higher education teachers, in particular at second and third Bologna levels. They combine theoretical knowledge with the requirements of the clinical environment. Their work is based on the third -level nursing care study programmes in accordance with the Bologna Declaration.

In view of the need for effective and high-quality management of medical nursing teams, nurses – as leaders at all levels – require additional knowledge from the field of leadership and management.

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE MIDWIFE

Midwives:

Midwives are independent and autonomous in their practice as graduate midwives (Bachelors of Midwifery - BMid) in accordance with the fundamental responsibilities and the relevant field of work. Midwifery care is provided by adhering to the applicable professional principles, guidelines and standards, whereby female patients are provided with the highest possible level of midwifery care safety and quality.

One of the main values of midwifery care is knowledge as a foundation for achieving objectives and professional development. Midwives should aim to pass on their knowledge and experience to other members of the midwifery and nursing team and to others who are in the early stages of their educational process. Their work is based on the level of education attained as part of the undergraduate higher professional education and lifelong learning.

Specialist midwives:

They are independent and autonomous in their practice as graduate midwives (Bachelors of Midwifery - BMid) with **specialist knowledge** and also carry out certain activities handed over by doctors. In doing so, they apply a high level of critical thinking and skills and suitable clinical judgment. Their work is based on clinical specialization as a form of postgraduate midwifery care education.

Midwives with a Master of Midwifery Studies

They are an integral part of systematic monitoring of clinical work and of the team management with the aim of improving clinical practice, as well as initiators of changes and improvements which are directly implemented into the midwifery care process. They are also holders and/or performers of scientific-research activities in the field of midwifery care, which involves active participation of members of the midwifery and medical team. They are students' mentors and higher education teachers at the first level according to the Bologna Process. Their work is based on the second-level health care study programme in accordance with the Bologna Declaration.

Midwives with a Doctorate of Midwifery:

They take on leading roles in defining and ensuring acceptable standards of clinical midwifery care, research and education based on direct involvement in the midwifery care process. They are also higher education teachers, in particular at second and third Bologna levels. They combine theoretical knowledge with the requirements of the clinical environment. Their work is based on the third -level midwifery care study programme in accordance with the Bologna Declaration.

In view of the need for effective and high-quality management of midwifery and nursing teams, midwives – as leaders at all levels – require additional knowledge from the field of leadership and management.

PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE HEALTH TECHNICIAN

Health technicians:

They are independent and autonomous in their practice as health technicians in accordance with the fundamental responsibilities and the relevant field of work. As members of nursing and medical teams they take part in providing nursing care and are thus involved in medical – educational work. By adhering to the applicable professional principles, guidelines and standards they provide patients with the highest possible level of nursing care safety and quality.

One of the main values of health technicians is knowledge as a foundation for achieving objectives and professional development. Health technicians aim to pass their knowledge and experience on to other members of the nursing team and to others who are in the early stages of their educational process. Their work is based on the level of education attained as part of the upper-secondary professional education and lifelong learning.

PERSONAL IMAGE OF THE NURSE, MIDWIFE AND HEALTH TECHNICIAN

Individuals who opt for a nursing or midwifery practice profession are expected to have physical, mental, spiritual and social maturity.

They are expected to take care of their own health so it does not interfere with their ability to care for others (ICN, 2005).

Their personal image consists of the basic human characteristics such as philanthropy, dignity, well-meaning, fairness, confidentiality, prudence, perseverance, optimism, respect, integrity and tolerance. It is furthermore characterized by the ability to coexist with other people, humanity and the ability for them to put themselves in the situation a fellow human being is in.

They are recognized for a personal culture with a clearly expressed communication culture, the capability of perception, critical thinking, self-evaluation, creativity and progress-research orientation.

They respect basic human values and patients' rights.

They maintain a positive image of their profession through proper behaviour and conduct at all times, and thereby increase public trust in the profession (ICN, 2005).

They aim for a friendly and respectful working environment.

Affiliation with their own profession is manifested through respect for the professional legacy, tradition and values related therewith, as well as through the membership in profession-related associations and the umbrella organization which take care of comprehensive development and excellence of the profession.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF THE NURSE, MIDWIFE AND HEALTH TECHNICIAN

Physical appearance of the nurse, midwife and health technician is expressed through a tidy appearance, as well as appropriate and respectful behaviour and conduct. Through their appearance they communicate information about themselves and their profession and demonstrate a level of self-awareness about their professional role.

Through their physical appearance they represent the attitudes towards themselves, other people, the profession itself and the professional role, the status and the institution they belong to. A tidy appearance gives out a clear message about professionalism, approachability, self-reliance and thus wins patients' trust. It is an important part of successful communication.

Nurses, midwives and health technicians are as part of their work exposed to critical observations of the general and expert public. Personal hygiene, tidiness and neat appearance are in accordance with the culture- and aesthetics-related rules, as well as hygiene-and epidemiology-related regulations.

Personal hygiene, tidiness and neat appearance

Well-kept, smooth and jewellery-free hands and well-kept nails meet the hygiene and epidemiological standards with the aim of preventing the spread of infections and contributing to a neat appearance.

A neat appearance may also be complemented by moderate and discreet facial make-up, which accentuates the personality and aesthetics of a female individual. Male staff members should either be clean shaven or have a neatly trimmed beard. Clean teeth are an essential part of a friendly professional smile. Another important part of the appearance is a well-groomed haircut; the hair should be taken care of, long hair should be tied back and short hair kept of the eyes and the face. Nurses, midwives and health technician are also characterized by the scent of cleanliness and freshness. A discreet fragrance may complement the overall physical appearance.

Jewellery should be moderate, unobtrusive and complementary to the personality; it should not impede work being carried out in a correct manner or interfere with the overall image. Wearing jewellery should comply with the hygiene regulations and standards.

Visible tattoos or body piercings do not comply with the image of the nurse, midwife and health technician.

A uniform as a symbol of the profession

Nurses, midwives and health technicians identify themselves and express affiliation with their occupational group by means of a traditional light blue uniform.

The uniform should be clean and tidy; when it should be worn and what it should be like is stipulated by regulations. The same applies to footwear, which should enable safe and firm walking without making any unpleasant noise.

Both female and male uniforms should as a rule throughout the year be complemented by socks in neutral colours and patterns.

In the workplace, nurses, midwives and health technicians should be identified by wearing identity badges.

They should attract no questionable attention through their appearance, behaviour and conduct, and should adjust their personal standards to the principles of professional tidiness and organizational culture of the institution.

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CLOSING REMARKS

The overall image should come alive and be reflected in every single nurse, midwife and health technician. It should manifest pride and affiliation to the profession.

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