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OPINION: Medication Refills Using A Nursing Protocol in an Ambulatory Setting

APPROVED: 1/31/14

REVISED DATE:

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:

SCOPE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

An advisory opinion adopted by AZBN is an interpretation of what the law requires. While an advisory opinion is not law, it is more than a recommendation. In other words, an advisory opinion is an official opinion of AZBN regarding the practice of nursing as it relates to the functions of nursing. Facility policies may restrict practice further in their setting and/or require additional expectations related to competency, validation, training, and supervision to assure the safety of their patient population and or decrease risk.

Within the Scope of Practice of X RN X LPN

ADVISORY OPINION

Medication Refills Using a Nursing Protocol in an Ambulatory Setting

STATEMENT OF SCOPE: It is within the Scope of Practice of a Registered Nurse (RN) and a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to initiate a nursing protocol to refill medications when there is a clear medication order from a Licensed Independent Provider (LIP) who has an established relationship with the client and has the independent legal authority to prescribe medications.

I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. The RN or LPN may initiate the medication refill protocol if the following requirements are met:
1. Medication Refill protocols are written and maintained by the employer and are reviewed by the employer on a regular basis.
 2. There is an order from the LIP for the nurse to initiate the protocol.
 3. The medications that may be refilled by nursing protocol are limited to maintenance medications (e.g. medications prescribed for chronic, long-term conditions, and are taken on a regular, recurring basis). All Schedule I-V medications are excluded, and may not be included in any nursing refill protocol.
 4. The medications may be refilled for a maximum of 90 days
 5. The medication refill nursing protocol contains the following elements:
 - a. The specific circumstances and time periods during which the protocol for the prescription may be implemented.
 - b. The cautions and/or contraindications for implementation of the prescription.
 - c. The original medication order includes all the required elements of drug, dosage, frequency, quantity, route of administration and directions for use.
 - d. The circumstances under which a prescription may be refilled.
 6. Documentation in the medical record should include a reference to the protocol as well as the date, name, and signature of the RN/LPN who initiated the protocol.
- B. Documentation of clinical competency regarding use of the protocol is on file with the employer.

II. COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

RN/LPN who utilize medication refill protocols are expected to possess the knowledge of, and demonstrate competency in applying the following in practice:

- A. The process for initiating the medication refill protocol.
- B. The circumstances under which a medication can be refilled through the use of a protocol.
- C. The purpose and pharmacokinetics, dosing, expected therapeutic effects, side effects, and contraindications for each medication included in the protocol.
- D. Documentation requirements.

III. RATIONALE:

Standardized protocols/decision-support tools have been effectively and safely utilized by Registered Nurses for many years. The use of medication refill protocols can improve medication safety by standardizing the medication refill process, reducing the number of hand-offs, and thereby helping to reduce medication refill errors.

IV. REFERENCES

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