Within the Scope of Practice of __X__ RN  ___ LPN

ADVISORY OPINION
PALLIATIVE SEDATION AT END OF LIFE

It is within the scope of practice of a Registered Nurse to administer medications that provide palliative sedation at the end of life. This may include medications classified as anesthetic agents, but not to be administered to provide an anesthetic as in A.R.S. 32-1661.

For the purpose of this advisory opinion, palliative sedation is defined as follows: the monitored use of medications intended to provide relief of refractory symptoms but not to intentionally hasten death.

A refractory symptom is one that cannot be controlled in a tolerable time frame despite use of therapies, and seems unlikely to be controlled by further therapies without excessive or intolerable acute or chronic side effects/complications.

I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS
   A. Written Policy and Procedure is maintained by the employer.
      1. Administration of medications must be on the order of a person licensed in this state to prescribe such medications.
      2. The patient must have sufficient level of nursing care to maintain sedation.
      3. The agency has identified medications allowed for palliative sedation, preferably by an interdisciplinary committee including nurses.
      4. Pre-sedation symptom assessment is performed by the RN.
      5. Post-sedation symptom assessment and ongoing assessments performed by the RN
      6. Documented supervised clinical practice and competency prior to unsupervised administration of palliative sedation medication.

II. RATIONALE
Patients at the end of life may experience physical, psychological, spiritual and existential distress which in most cases can be relieved by optimal end of life care. However, some patients at times may suffer from intractable symptoms. For those patients who are...
imminently dying and whose suffering is unrelenting and unendurable, palliative sedation may offer relief. The intent of palliative sedation is to relieve suffering in dying patients but not to deliberately hasten death. This distinction separates it from euthanasia and/or assisted suicide where the intent is solely to end life.

III. REFERENCES


National Ethics Committee, Veterans Health Administration. (2006). The ethics of palliative sedation as a therapy of last resort. The American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Care, 23(6), 483-491. doi:10.1177/10