

MINISTRY OF HEALTH - UAE

FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF NURSING



SCOPE OF PRACTICE
Registered Midwife

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SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Registered Midwife

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SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Registered Midwife

Introduction

The following Midwifery competency framework has been developed in collaboration with nursing representatives from all Emirates in the attempt to facilitate consistency in midwifery standards throughout the UAE and has been adopted by the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD) and Dubai Health authority (DHA).

In 2000, the Eastern Mediterranean Region Office (EMRO) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) identified, at a Global Advisory Group meeting on Nursing and Midwifery, a number of challenges being faced by governments and providers in this region for midwifery (and nursing) services: increased demand for midwifery education and services which parallels the incremental population growth, provision of evidence-based practice, quality improvement of clinical practice and more formalized systems of nursing regulation (p.14). It has also been raised by Buscher and Wagner (2004), that midwives (and nurses) are not working to their full potential in this region, with "...lack of adequate legislation [being] identified as the most prevailing reason, including the need for a definition of roles and scope of practice" (p.12).

The following document seeks to address some of these concerns through defining a Scope of Practice with associated competency standards for the practicing midwife in the UAE, to provide a basis for regulation and licensure for midwifery practice. As has recently been declared by the ICM/WHO/ICN in Islamabad, "All people should have access to competent nurses and midwives who provide care, supervision and support in all settings" (March 2007); therefore UAE Midwives need a set of competency standards to frame practice to encompass education, counseling, care and support to women and families throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period. Accepting that care is holistic and aims to meet social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and physical needs of a woman's reproductive health experience, entry to practice midwifery competence needs to be based upon successful completion of an approved midwifery educational program.

In developing the Midwifery Scope, consideration has been given to the UAE MOH Professional Code of Conduct (2001), the FDON Scope of Practice for the Registered Nurse and/or Midwife (2004), the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) Philosophy and Model of Midwifery Care (2005), together with a detailed review of international practice scopes to ensure that the final document is current and relevant to the UAE social context. One of the difficulties faced when attempting to define midwifery competency is the complex nature of practice and the wide variety of knowledge, skills

and attributes that are necessary in providing midwifery care in very different settings. In addition to the above documents, the ICM Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice (2002) has been a useful guide in the development of the UAE Midwifery scope of practice.

Midwifery practice described

Midwives have been identified as being pivotal in not only primary health care programs within the community, but in playing a critical role in facilitating the health of the nation in which they work (ICM, 2007). While pregnancy and childbirth are considered normal life events, it is the midwife who has been identified as the most appropriate and cost effective health care professional to provide care in normal pregnancy and childbirth, including risk assessment and recognition of complications (WHO, 1995).

WHO recognizes that midwives, who are allowed to use the full range of their skills, can positively impact upon maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity rates (WHO, 1994). Women are placed at the centre of midwifery care, where wellness is promoted through establishing partnerships with women to promote self-care which affects not only individual health, but that of the family. The key concepts identified by the ICM which help define midwifery practice include respect for human dignity, advocacy for women, cultural sensitivity, a focus on health promotion and disease prevention, equity of status for women and a commitment to improvement of basic living conditions as well as providing competent midwifery services (ICM, 2005).

A midwife may thus be defined:

“A midwife is a person who, having been regularly admitted to a midwifery educational programme, duly recognized in the country in which it is located, has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery and has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practise midwifery” (ICM, 2005)

A midwife is responsible and accountable for her own practice and is able to work independently, yet collaboratively with other health care professionals. Competency to practice necessitates ongoing reflection and evaluation of own performance, with this process being facilitated by considering the practice standards specified in the following Scope of Practice document.

Inherent within the Scope of Practice is the need to demonstrate safe practice. Safety to practice as a midwife is evident when applicants for registration meet the competencies identified by the regulatory authority. The Scope of Practice has therefore been developed to ensure that the public of the UAE can be confident in the abilities of midwives in the provision of safe and effective midwifery care.

Three Domains of Practice have been identified. Core midwifery competency standards and associated performance criteria are located within these three domains of practice.

Domains of Practice

1. Midwifery Practice and Comprehensive Care
2. Professional, Legal and Ethical Practice
3. Professional Development

Competency Statements

Each Domain of Practice has competency statements and associated performance criteria that a midwife must demonstrate to fulfil regulatory and registration requirements. A competency is a combination and integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes which result in effective performance (ACMI, 2001). These essential competencies for basic midwifery practice are based on values, vision, strategies and actions used by midwives who attend to the health needs of women and childbearing families. Performance criteria are the measurable outcomes that underpin the competency.

Competence is not static and knowledge underpinning the rationale may change over time. New knowledge influences practice. These competency statements decreed by the regulatory authority will therefore be reviewed and adapted to keep abreast of developments in practice.

Domain 1: Midwifery Practice and Comprehensive Care

This domain relates to aspects of a registered midwife's performance and behaviour which indicates she has the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes to practice according to the international definition of midwife. The competency standards in this domain have expected performance outcomes that reflect the midwife's ability to provide evidence based, safe and effective midwifery care which is of high quality, culturally relevant and appropriate for women, newborn and childbearing families in a variety of settings.

Competency 1.1 Promotes health and provides education to the woman and her family

Midwives provide high quality, culturally sensitive health education and services to all women and their families in order to promote healthy family life, planned pregnancies and positive parenting.

Performance criteria

- Identifies, participates in and contributes to the development of health education programs in the community
- Provides women and their families with accurate information
- Supports women and their families to promote health and well-being

Competency 1.2 Facilitates decision-making by the woman and her family

Midwives provide evidence-based information to women and their families facilitating them to make informed choices regarding their care.

Performance criteria:

- Offers advice and midwifery care that respects the cultural and social needs of each woman and her family
- Communicates relevant information effectively, using language that is readily understood
- Actively listens to the woman and her family and responds to their needs
- Facilitates learning opportunities through sharing of information
- Advocates informed choice and shared decision-making

Competency 1.3 Provides safe and effective antenatal care

Midwives provide high quality antenatal care to maximize health during pregnancy which includes prevention, early detection and treatment or referral of selected complications.

Performance criteria:

1.3.1 Promotes the health and well-being of the pregnant woman and the foetus

- Uses the nursing process to plan, implement and evaluate holistic antenatal care in collaboration with the woman and significant others
- Educates women and families about normal physiological changes of pregnancy and advise on strategies to relieve common discomforts
- Assesses the growth and well-being of the foetus

- Provides nutritional advice for pregnancy and lactation
- Interprets and acts upon information from antenatal assessments
- Interprets and analyses basic screening laboratory/ultrasound studies
- Identifies health risk factors and refers care as necessary

1.3.2 Prepares the woman for labour, birth and parenting

- Educates the woman about the onset and process of labour
- Provides information about pain relief, birth positions and delivery options to facilitate informed choices
- Protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding in alignment with current WHO/UNICEF guidelines

Competency 1.4 Provides safe and effective intrapartum care

Midwives provide high quality, culturally sensitive care during labour, conduct a safe delivery, and respond in emergency situations to maximise the health of women and the newborn.

Performance criteria:

1.4.1 Demonstrates an understanding of the physiology of labour

- Recognizes the relevant critical diameters and landmarks of the maternal reproductive anatomy
- Identifies the signs which indicate onset and progress of labour
- Identifies the measures to assess foetal and maternal well-being in labour
- Identifies the signs and indicators of complications

1.4.2 Demonstrates competency in the skills needed to support the woman during childbirth

- Promotes normal physiological childbirth
- Identifies complications or deviations from the norm
- Implements midwifery care which reduces risk and harm
- Encourages and respects woman's preferences throughout labour and delivery, involving the family as requested
- Recognizes emergency situations and intervenes in a timely manner

Competency 1.5: Provides safe and effective postnatal care

Midwives provide comprehensive, high quality culturally sensitive postnatal care for women and the newborn.

Performance criteria:

1.5.1 Demonstrates an understanding of the physiology of the puerperium

- Identifies the normal process of involution and healing following childbirth
- Facilitates the process of lactation and bonding, supporting the mother-infant dyad
- Recognises maternal nutritional, physiological and emotional needs and acts accordingly
- Educates the woman about discomforts of the puerperium and advises on strategies to relieve them
- Recognises complications and acts accordingly

1.5.2 Demonstrates competency in the skills needed to support the woman and her family during the postnatal period

- Uses the nursing process to plan, implement and evaluate holistic postnatal care in collaboration with the woman and significant others
- Performs focused physical examinations of the mother
- Initiates and supports uninterrupted (exclusive) breastfeeding
- Provides support for women who make an informed decision not to breastfeed
- Counsels and provides education for the woman and her family on reproductive health issues, including sexuality, family planning and bereavement

Competency 1.6: Provides safe and effective care of the newborn

Midwives provide high quality, comprehensive care for essentially healthy newborn from birth to six weeks

Performance criteria:

1.6.1 Demonstrates a basic knowledge of the physiology and needs of the newborn

- Recognises signs of newborn adaptation to extra-uterine life
- Identifies factors relevant to infant growth and development
- Identifies variations in the normal newborn and acts accordingly
- Implements health promotion and disease prevention strategies

1.6.2 Demonstrates competency in the skills needed to safely care for the newborn

- Evaluates the newborn's condition using the Apgar score at 1 and 5 minutes
- Performs an initial assessment of the newborn's appearance and behaviour
- Performs a detailed physical examination of the newborn
- Positions the newborn for effective breastfeeding
- Performs interventions to facilitate adaptation to extra-uterine life
- Recognises complications and acts accordingly
- Initiates emergency measures when necessary

Competency 1.7 Performs safe and effective pharmacological interventions

Midwives are able to administer¹ relevant pharmacological substances safely and effectively according to legislation within the UAE

Performance criteria:

1.7.1 Demonstrates evidence based practice in use of pharmacological preparations relevant to midwifery practice

- Educates the woman about the potential effects of medication during pregnancy, birth and lactation
- Educates the woman about any medications required by the newborn
- Accurately calculates medication doses for administration

¹ See Definitions for statement on Advanced Practice including prescribing rights for Midwives

- Safely administers medications during pregnancy, birth and lactation
- Recognizes contra-indications and side effects and acts accordingly
- Documents medication administration accurately

Domain 2: Professional, Legal and Ethical Practice

This domain reflects the registered midwife's legal and professional accountability to women and their families, the community, relevant regulatory authorities and employers, for all elements of clinical practice and decision making. This necessitates autonomy to practice within a scope of competency and an ability to work independently and in collaboration with others.

Competency 2.1 Functions in accordance with legislative and policy guidelines relevant to midwifery practice

Performance criteria:

- Maintains current license to practice as an outcome of self-regulation
- Identifies unsafe practice and intervenes accordingly
- Functions within a set midwifery scope of practice as delineated by this document
- Practices only to the level for which she is adequately prepared, supervised and supported to perform
- Utilizes relevant codes of conduct as a guide to midwifery practice
- Contributes to policy development impacting on midwifery practice
- Interacts with policy makers and legislators to influence legislation and regulation pertaining to midwifery practice
- Documents midwifery care accurately

Competency 2.2 Assumes responsibility and accountability for own actions and clinical decision making

Performance criteria:

- Performs ongoing self-evaluation to determine strengths and limitations in knowledge and skills
- Consults and performs referrals as necessary
- Assumes responsibility for delegation and supervision of midwifery care (direct and indirect), which is relevant to the context and the competence of the person to whom care is delegated
- Accepts responsibility for delegated activities relevant to the context and own level of competence
- Works collaboratively with other health care professionals to improve the delivery of services to women and families
- Advocates for women and families to ensure promotion of a healthy and safe birth

Competency 2.3 Delivers care and practices midwifery within an ethical framework and social context

Performance criteria:

- Implements midwifery care in a culturally respectful and non-judgmental manner
- Bases midwifery practice on ethical decision making
- Works in partnership with women to support them in making informed choices about their health

- Acts to strengthen women in promoting health of self and others
- Communicates effectively with women, families and health care professionals to optimize care
- Advocates to protect rights of women and families in relation to midwifery care

Domain 3: Professional Development

This domain acknowledges that each midwife is accountable for establishing, maintaining and evaluating their own life long learning needs to ensure continuing competence to practice. Professional development includes not only development of self, but a commitment to the development of others and the profession, to facilitate high quality care delivery and enhancement of professional standards.

Competency 3.1 Demonstrates a commitment to development of self

Performance criteria:

- Maintains knowledge and skills through actively participating in continuing professional development programs
- Uses valid research to inform midwifery practice
- Actively engages in continuous self-assessment to evaluate and enhance own practice
- Maintains record of all learning and professional development activities attended

Competency 3.2 Demonstrates a commitment to development of others and the profession

Performance criteria:

- Collaborates and shares professional knowledge with others
- Supports others less experienced or new to the profession through formal and informal preceptor and mentor programs
- Participates in facilitating and co-ordinating learning opportunities for others
- Contributes to health care policy as relevant to midwifery practice
- Identifies opportunities and contributes to nursing research
- Refers to and disseminates current research to guide midwifery practice

Definitions

Advanced/ extended practice

Clinical practice which lies outside this Midwifery scope is considered as extended practice, which requires additional approved/accredited education and training to ensure the Midwife has the knowledge and skills necessary to perform at an advanced level beyond the stated core competencies expected at level of entry to practice. Examples of such roles might include direct referral of clients to other health care professionals, prescribing of medications, and ordering of diagnostic investigations. Such advanced practice involves care delivery at levels of greater complexity and are usually recognised through formal systems of certification and privileging. Regulatory systems for advanced practice licensure is not available at this stage in the UAE, thus Midwifery licensure is guided by the basic core competencies as presented in this Scope of Practice.

Competence

'...the combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and abilities that underpin effective and/or superior performance in a profession / occupational area' (ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, 2006)

Registered Midwife

After completion of secondary school education, graduation from a midwifery programme of at least three (3) years duration OR graduation from a midwifery programme of at least twelve (12) months duration after completion of a three (3) year nursing programme, with a proof of academic achievement of at least sixty percent (60%) of total marks.

Scope

Is the breadth of clinical practice which a midwife is expected to competently perform within a specific context, and for which they are educated and legally authorised to do so.

Significant others

Individual(s) who have a meaningful relationship with the woman before, during or after childbirth and who are considered to play an important role in her life. Within midwifery practice these may be, for example the marriage partner/spouse, family members, friends, colleagues, religious and other human support resources (FDON-MOH, 2004)

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