The Rehabilitation Staff Nurse
Role Description

Introduction
The goal of rehabilitation nursing is to assist individuals with disability and/or chronic illness to attain and maintain maximum function. The rehabilitation staff nurse assists clients in adapting to an altered lifestyle, while providing a therapeutic environment for client's and their family's development. The rehabilitation staff nurse designs and implements treatment strategies that are based on scientific nursing theory related to self-care and that promote physical, psychosocial, and spiritual health. The rehabilitation staff nurse works in inpatient and outpatient settings that can be found in a range of acute to subacute rehabilitation facilities. This role description has been developed by staff nurses to clarify and specify the responsibilities of the staff nurse in a rehabilitation setting and to promote professionalism based on the established scope and standards of rehabilitation nursing practice.

General responsibilities of the rehabilitation staff nurse
- Possesses the specialized knowledge and clinical skills necessary to provide care for people with physical disability and chronic illness
- Coordinates educational activities and uses appropriate resources to develop and implement an individualized teaching and discharge plan with clients and their families
- Performs hands-on nursing care by utilizing the nursing process to achieve quality outcomes for clients
- Provides direction and supervision of ancillary nursing personnel, demonstrates professional judgment, uses problem solving techniques and time-management principles, and delegates appropriately
- Coordinates nursing care activities in collaboration with other members of the interdisciplinary rehabilitation team to facilitate achievement of overall goals
- Demonstrates effective oral and written communication skills to develop a rapport with clients, their families, and health team members and to ensure the fulfillment of requirements for legal documentation and reimbursement
- Acts as a resource and a role model for nursing staff and students and participates in activities such as nursing committees and professional organizations that promote the improvement of nursing care and the advancement of professional rehabilitation nursing
- Applies nursing research to clinical practice and participates in nursing research studies

Roles and functions of the rehabilitation staff nurse

Teacher
- Shares information about the disease processes underlying disabilities and teaches nursing techniques to help clients and their families develop the self-care skills necessary to move toward wellness on the illness-wellness continuum
- Prepares clients and their families for future self-management and decision-making responsibilities by fostering clients’ independence and goal achievement
- Reinforces the teaching done by specialists in rehabilitation and other healthcare disciplines and provides resource materials for clients’ changing needs
- Provides in-service education for healthcare team members and members of the community regarding the prevention of disabilities

Caregiver
- Assesses the physical, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual dimensions of clients and their families, as well as their educational and discharge needs in order to formulate nursing diagnoses
- Plans nursing care while acknowledging that rehabilitation nursing is practiced within a dynamic, therapeutic, and supportive relationship that is constantly changing, as nurses and clients influence one another
- Implements a plan of care by providing nursing care and education directly or through ancillary personnel, as needed, to maintain and restore function and prevent complications and further loss
- Evaluates the nursing care that is being provided and modifies the plan, as needed, to achieve measurable goals and objectives
Collaborator

- Develops goals, in collaboration with clients, their families, and the rehabilitation team, that are oriented to wellness behavior and are reality based and that encourage socialization with others
- Participates in the interdisciplinary team process at team conferences and other team meetings and offers input into team decision making
- Intervenes with team members and other healthcare professionals to ensure that the optimal opportunity for recovery is made available to the client, the most significant member of the rehabilitation team
- Collaborates with team members to achieve cost-effective care by utilizing appropriate clinical measures to meet emergent physical, psychosocial, and spiritual situations

Client advocate

- Actively listens, reflects, and guides clients and their families through the stages of the grieving process to mourn the loss of abilities and roles
- Advocates for policies and services that promote the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and participates in activities that will positively influence the community’s awareness of disabilities
- Contributes to a safe and therapeutic environment and supports activities that promote the clients’ return of function and prevent complications or chronic illness
- Intervenes on behalf of clients to ensure that medical professionals and nonmedical professionals work to maximize clients’ success when they return to work or school

Sources Consulted


This role description was developed by the Staff Nurse Special Interest Group of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses.