

**SASKATCHEWAN REGISTERED NURSES ASSOCIATION  
COUNCIL POLICY**

**POLICY NAME:** NP Prescribing Methadone  
for Pain Management

**NUMBER:** GP 3.15

**POLICY TYPE:** Governance Process

**DATE OF ORIGIN:** March 2019

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Clarification regarding Buprenorphine – There is no additional educational requirement or Registrar approval required for an NP to prescribe Buprenorphine in any form solely for the purpose of pain management.

Pursuant to *The Registered Nurses Act, 1988*, Section 7, Section 15(2)(d) and Section 15(2)(f.1) and SRNA Bylaw I, Subsection 3(1)(a) and Bylaw VI, Section 3, (3)(c)(i2), and Bylaw VI, Section 4, the regulatory processes required for an NP to prescribe methadone for pain management and/or palliation is further defined in this policy.

1. This Council Policy sets the requirements for NPs to prescribe methadone for pain management.
  - 1.1 In accordance with the SRNA mandate to set standards for competence and to govern prescribing, the RN(NP) must meet the following requirements prior to receiving authority to prescribe methadone for pain management:
    - 1.1.1 Practice Requirements
    - 1.1.2 Practice Assessment Application
    - 1.1.3 Education Requirement
    - 1.1.4 Practicum Requirement
    - 1.1.5 Continuing Education/Competency Requirements
    - 1.1.6 Audit Requirements
    - 1.1.7 Monitoring Requirements
2. No NP shall prescribe methadone for pain unless the Registrar has granted approval for the NP to do so.
3. The Registrar may grant temporary approval to an NP who does not meet the requirements of this council policy to prescribe methadone for pain if the Registrar concludes that it is appropriate to grant that approval to ensure continuity of care to clients. The Registrar will, in granting that approval, state the period for which that approval is in effect and any conditions and/or restrictions on that approval.

#### 4. Practice Requirements

4.1 The NP must practice within the legislated scope of practice including of the following:

4.1.1 Current *Nurse Practitioner Practice Standards*;

4.1.2 Current *Nurse Practitioner Controlled Drugs and Substances Prescribing Guidelines*;

4.1.3 Current Code of Ethics; and

4.1.4 SRNA Policies.

4.2 The NP must be a member in good standing to receive approval to prescribe methadone for pain management.

4.3 The NP provides methadone treatment options for pain management that are consistent with current evidence-informed best practices and clinical practice guidelines.

4.4 The NP regularly sees clients requiring methadone for pain management within their own practice and adheres to the principles of current SRNA *Council Policy 3.16 Common Medical Disorders*.

4.5 The NP ensures that the practice environment supports their practice to prescribe methadone for pain management. The following must be in place in the practice setting prior to the NP prescribing:

4.5.1 Employer support for NP prescribing;

4.5.2 Access to a methadone drug therapeutics initiating provider who meets all federal and provincial requirements;

4.5.3 Access to a multidisciplinary team including but not limited to laboratory and pharmacy services and/or other health care professionals to provide clients with a full range of treatment options; and

4.5.4 Access to after-hours care and continuity of care through a multidisciplinary team.

4.6 The NP will begin prescribing methadone for pain management as a maintenance prescriber where the clients have been stabilized on drug therapeutics by a methadone initiating provider who meets all federal and provincial requirements.

4.7 To advance from maintenance prescriber to initiating prescriber, the NP must demonstrate the following:

4.7.1 Competence to evaluate the suitability of therapeutic management;

4.7.2 Practice within a multidisciplinary team;

4.7.3 Regularly assess and treat clients with chronic pain and/or palliation; and

4.7.4 Mentorship and support from an established initiating prescriber.

4.8 The NP will adhere to SRNA Bylaw VI, Section 4 and will utilize the Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP) when prescribing methadone for pain management.

- 4.9 The NP shall not prescribe methadone for pain management in any practice setting without completing the requirements set out in this policy for NP prescribing methadone for pain management.
- 4.10 When the NP changes practice settings, the NP must notify the Registrar.
- 4.11 Once requirements are met by the NP, the approval to prescribe methadone for pain will be indicated on the Register.
- 4.12 The NP must complete a practice assessment at the following times:
- 4.12.1 When the NP has a change in practice setting; and/or
  - 4.12.2 When the NP advances to initiating methadone prescriber.

## **5. NP Maintenance Prescriber Application**

5.1 The initial requirement for the NP to apply for approval to prescribe methadone for pain management includes:

- 5.1.1 *NP Maintenance Prescriber Application – Methadone for Pain Management*
- 5.1.2 *NP Practice Assessment - Maintenance Prescriber for Methadone for Pain Management*
- 5.1.3 *NP Undertaking - Prescribing Methadone for Pain Management*

## **6. Education Requirement**

6.1 In order to receive approval to prescribe methadone for pain management, the NP must meet the education requirement recognized by Council.

6.2 Council has recognized the following initial education requirement for NPs prescribing methadone for pain management:

6.2.1 [Methadone for Pain in Palliative Care](#) from the Canadian Virtual Hospice

6.3 New courses may be approved by Council and council policy will be updated accordingly.

6.4 The NP must submit confirmation documents of having completed the practicum to the SRNA.

## **7. Practicum Requirement**

7.1 In addition to completing the theoretical course, the NP will complete a one-day clinical practicum with a methadone initiating provider who meets all federal and provincial requirements.

7.2 The NP must submit confirmation documents of having completed the practicum to the SRNA.

## **8. Continuing Education/Competency Requirements**

8.1 The NP must regularly participate in continuing education focused on methadone, pain management and/or palliation as part of their Continuing Competence Program requirements.

8.2 The NP must retain documentation of continuing education focused on methadone, pain management and/or palliation.

8.3 The practice assessment is designed according to the NP Standards.

8.4 The NP must submit continuing education confirmation documents to the SRNA as part of the audit requirements.

## **9. Audit Requirements**

9.1 For the purpose of this Council Policy, an undertaking is defined as a formal agreement between the SRNA and the NP. The undertaking states that the NP shall comply with the audit requirements as determined by the Registrar.

9.2 The NP must sign an undertaking in which the NP agrees to the following:

9.2.1 To practice in accordance with the current Bylaws, Standards, Council Policies and guidelines, and

9.2.2 To comply with audit requirements, as determined by the Registrar.

9.3 The audit requirements include a practice audit and may include an on-site audit or a chart audit, as determined by the Registrar.

9.4 The practice audit is a professional improvement tool that supports safe prescribing of methadone for pain management.

9.5 Audit requirements for methadone for pain management is a supplementary process that is distinct from the audit process of the Continuing Competence Program.

9.6 Annually, a random number of NPs will be selected from all NPs prescribing methadone for pain. Therefore, an NP prescriber should always be prepared to be selected for the annual audit.

9.7 NP participation in the annual audit will be documented.

9.8 When concerns are identified in the practice audit, the Registrar or designate may follow up with the NP in accordance with SRNA Bylaw VI, Section 4.

9.9 When an on-site audit and/or chart audit is required, the Registrar will notify the NP in writing.

## **10. Monitoring Requirements**

10.1 In accordance with SRNA Bylaw VI Section 4, the prescribing profiles of the NP prescribing methadone for pain will be monitored by the SRNA Registrar or designate.

10.2 The NP must submit the documentation as requested by the Registrar.

## **11. Process to Suspend Approval to Prescribe Methadone for Pain**

11.1 The Registrar may suspend the approval granted to a NP to prescribe methadone for pain management if the Registrar concludes that the NP has failed to comply with the terms of the applicable bylaws, standards and council

policies. Pursuant to *The Registered Nurses Act, 1988*, Section 26, a complaint shall be submitted to the Investigation Committee for further review.

11.2 A decision made by the Registrar is subject to appeal to Council under Section 21(3)(b) of *The Registered Nurses Act, 1988*.

11.3 At any time the NP may surrender their approval to prescribe methadone for pain management. The NP must complete the required surrender form and submit it to the Registrar.