



Interpretive Guideline

Title: Registered Nurse Role in the Care of Patients Undergoing Exercise Cardiac Stress Testing

Guidelines for registered nurse care of patients undergoing exercise cardiac stress testing:

The scope of practice for registered nurses may include care of patients undergoing exercise cardiac stress testing in circumstances where the safety and well being of the patient can be ensured through a supportive clinical environment that contains appropriate monitoring capabilities and availability of the necessary health care personnel and equipment to address complications. The nursing care may include the nurse's implementation of an exercise protocol, the operation of specific exercise equipment, and monitoring the patient before, during, and after the stress test.

A registered nurse's care of a patient during cardiac stress testing may be within the scope of registered nursing practice if the following guidelines are observed:

- A. The RN has acquired and documented knowledge, skill, and competency in the care of patients undergoing exercise cardiac stress testing.
- B. The RN has a valid order from an authorized provider, and the authorizing provider, or other authorized provider who is qualified to respond to clinical concerns is immediately available within the facility.
- C. The RN may execute the ordered exercise protocol and regimen including:
 1. Obtaining information regarding the patient's most current health status to identify any contraindications for implementing the stress testing order;
 2. Informing the patient of the RN's role in the cardiac stress test procedure;
 3. Obtaining an EKG;
 4. Operating appropriate exercise equipment, as indicated;
 5. Implementing the exercise protocol;
 6. Monitoring vital signs;
 7. Identifying a cardiac rhythm;
 8. Identifying EKG changes that may suggest cardiac ischemia; and
 9. Documenting and reporting findings to the appropriate authorized providers.

D. In executing a nursing regimen in the care of patients undergoing cardiac stress testing, the registered nurse should perform the following activities:

1. Monitoring of the patient prior to, during, and immediately following the procedure, including:
 - a) Hemodynamic measurements and status;
 - b) Respiratory parameters; and
 - c) Identifying electrocardiogram parameters including rate, rhythm, ST segment elevation or depression, as measured in various leads;
2. Communicating changes in the patient's status to the authorized provider and other members of the health care team as necessary; and
3. Implementing, as indicated, emergency measures to optimize the patient's respiratory and circulatory status until other qualified healthcare personnel assume care of the patient.

The registered nurse should not provide informed consent related to the necessity of the cardiac stress test or the risks and benefits of the procedure, or interpret the results of the cardiac stress test as these activities are considered the practice of medicine and surgery and are prohibited by Section 4723.151 (A), Ohio Revised Code (ORC).

Considerations in Providing Nursing Care to Patients Undergoing Cardiac Stress Testing (Rule 4723-4-03, Ohio Administrative Code (OAC)):

The registered nurse providing care to patients during cardiac stress testing should maintain documentation of his/her acquisition of education, demonstrated competency, and other documentation that ensures practice is consistent with standards of practice and the employing facility/institutional policies and procedures. An authorized provider should be readily available in the facility as defined by employer/institutional policy, to manage any complications that may arise during the time period when the registered nurse is performing the exercise cardiac stress test.

- A. The registered nurse's education/training, and demonstrated competence should include the following:
 1. Anatomy and physiology of the cardiopulmonary system;
 2. Knowledge of cardiac stress tests and exercise physiology;
 3. Indications, contraindications, and potential complications related to cardiac stress tests;
 4. Normal and abnormal cardiac response to exertion;
 5. Utilization of appropriate monitoring modalities and emergency equipment;

6. Basic and advanced cardiac life support measures;
7. Cardiac dysrhythmia recognition and intervention; and
8. Registered nurse responsibilities prior to, during, and following the exercise cardiac stress testing as defined and approved in institutional policy.

Accountability and Responsibility of Nurses

Section 4723.01(B), ORC, defines the scope of practice for the registered nurse. Rule 4723-4-03, OAC, holds registered nurses responsible for maintaining and demonstrating current knowledge, skills, abilities, and competence in rendering nursing care within their scope of practice.

The registered nurse must apply the Nurse Practice Act (Chapter 4723, ORC) and rules regulating the practice of nursing (Chapters 4723-1 to 4723-27, OAC) to the specific practice setting. Further, the registered nurse must utilize good professional judgment in determining whether or not to engage in a given patient-care related activity, consistent with the law and rules, and guided by the Board *RN and LPN Decision Making Model*. It is critical to note that the law and rules require that the licensee provide nursing care only in circumstances that are consistent with their education, experience, knowledge, and demonstrated competency.

In this statement the Board does not announce a new policy but instead gives licensees specific instructions regarding their obligations under existing law and rules.

Licensees should review the following:

Section 4723.01(B), ORC
Section 4723.151, ORC
Rule 4723-4-03, OAC
Rule 4723-4-06, OAC
Rule 4723-4-07, OAC
Utilizing Interpretive Guidelines

A complete copy of the Nurse Practice Act and the rules adopted thereunder are available for review and download from the Board of Nursing website at www.nursing.ohio.gov on the Law and Rules page. All Interpretive Guidelines and the Utilizing Interpretive Guidelines document are available on the Practice RN & LPN page.

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