



POSITION STATEMENT

Role and Value of the Orthopaedic Nurse

ISSUE

Professional orthopaedic nurses provide specialized care across the life span requiring competencies in care for metabolic and surgical conditions in pediatrics to the aging adult (National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses [NAON] Core 8th ed, 2022). As a unique surgical population, the orthopaedic patient is placed at a higher risk for adverse events and complications due to underlying physical conditions, comorbidities, and operative locations (2019, IJOC).

With the aging population and the rise of degenerative musculoskeletal conditions, such as osteoarthritis (OA), orthopaedics continues to be the most frequently used and most expensive surgical subspecialty (Chen et al, 2023). As the health care needs and the health-related social needs of orthopaedic patients and their families increase, and the overall costs of healthcare continues to rise, orthopaedic nurses are challenged to deliver safe, quality, coordinated, and cost-effective patient care. The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity report recognizes nurses' role and impact on the medical and social factors to drive health outcomes (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NAEMS], 2021).

Professional orthopaedic nurses play integral roles in all aspects of orthopaedic care delivery in various practice settings and within the scope of practice based on education, training, and certification. The practice settings are in the inpatient and outpatient space to include ambulatory surgical centers, acute care hospitals, outpatient clinics, extended or long-term care, rehabilitation centers, home care, hospice, and community environments (Harvey et al., 2013). The care of patients with musculoskeletal conditions are delivered in other specialty areas of practice to include but not limited to rheumatology, emergency, pediatrics, oncology, critical care, rehabilitation, and peri-operative services.

This variety of care delivery settings has led to an increased diversity in orthopaedic nursing roles (Kneale and Davis, 2005; Scott Fowler et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2021; Turcotte et al., 2021). Orthopaedic nurses are expected to deliver safe, coordinated, quality care in the prevention and treatment of any pathophysiological musculoskeletal disorders. Thus, providing clarity to the role and promoting the value of the orthopaedic nurse is vital to the specialty of orthopaedic nursing practice.

NAON is committed to supporting orthopaedic nurses in their pursuit of excellence, innovation, and leadership in the specialty. We believe that by fostering a professional environment that values education, research, and clinical expertise, orthopaedic nurses will continue to make significant contributions to healthcare and improve the lives of those with musculoskeletal conditions.

POSITION

The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses champions the critical role and invaluable contribution of orthopaedic nurses in managing musculoskeletal disorders whether arising from disease, injury, or impairment. NAON advocates for:

1. The role of orthopaedic nurse in the delivery of comprehensive care, significantly improving patient outcomes through specialized knowledge and skills in musculoskeletal health.



2. Advancement of musculoskeletal healthcare by encouraging orthopaedic nurses' engagement in continuous professional development, thereby promoting excellence in research, education, and clinical practice.
3. Innovative practice and a culture of inquiry among orthopaedic nurses, utilizing evidence-based practice and cutting-edge research to address healthcare trends and practice issues, thus elevating the quality and safety of patient care.
4. The orthopaedic nurse's role in multidisciplinary healthcare teams to foster a holistic and patient centric approach to patient care, enhancing outcomes and patient satisfaction.
5. Orthopaedic nurses engagement in global health initiatives, sharing best practices and innovations to address worldwide musculoskeletal health challenges.
6. The role of the orthopaedic nurse as advocates for patients and leaders in healthcare, influencing policies, standards, and practices to ensure equitable access to high-quality musculoskeletal care.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

Nursing is a multifaceted profession dedicated to the protection, promotion, and optimization of health, the prevention of illness and injury, the alleviation of suffering through the precise diagnosis and treatment of human responses, and the staunch advocacy for the well-being of individuals, families, communities, and populations (ANA, 2021). In the specialized field of orthopaedic nursing, this role is further honed to focus on the enhancement of wellness and self-care, the sustained maintenance of health, the proactive prevention of injury and illness, the facilitation of recovery, and ensuring the highest quality of life for individuals experiencing disorders of the musculoskeletal system (NAON, Scope and Standards, 2013).

Through their specialized knowledge and skills, orthopaedic nurses embody the nursing profession's core values by providing targeted care that addresses the specific needs of those with musculoskeletal issues, thereby enriching the broader mission of nursing to foster health and well-being across all spectrums of society. Distinguished by their specialized training and competency, professional orthopaedic nurse:

- Engages independently or as part of a multidisciplinary team, including patients and their families, to deliver targeted, effective, and streamlined care and education
- Possess the expertise to evaluate, diagnose, and manage conditions commonly faced by orthopaedic patients, such as pain, limited mobility, self-care deficits, skin integrity issues, body image disturbances, and post-traumatic stress, among others
- Employs clinical judgment and decision-making rooted in the nursing process, theoretical knowledge, research findings, and specific knowledge of orthopaedic care
- Conducts comprehensive and holistic assessments of individuals and/or families, prioritizing the effects of musculoskeletal conditions on self-care, environmental adjustments, available resources, and support systems
- Develops, implements, and continuously evaluates plans of care, advocating for a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach in decision-making regarding patient care
- Maintains current orthopaedic knowledge, committing to the continuous education of themselves and their peers in the healthcare community
- Engages in peer review processes to ensure the highest standards of nursing practice
- Acts as educator, mentor, and exemplary figure for nursing peers, students, and other professionals



- Actively participates in professional nursing organizations to promote educational growth and professional development
- Applies research and evidence-based practices across various clinical settings to enhance patient care
- Leads and contribute to clinical research, disseminating findings through presentations and publications to advance the profession
- Remains politically aware, advocating for healthcare reforms and policies that benefit patient care and the nursing profession

Advanced practice orthopaedic nurses incorporate all the above aspects of the professional orthopaedic nursing role but are also:

- Experts in advanced clinical practice with the ability to perform complex clinical procedures and thorough assessments, demonstrating unparalleled expertise in navigating the challenges of orthopaedic care, and managing intricate patient conditions with precision
- Leaders in healthcare policy who spearhead efforts to shape healthcare policies affecting musculoskeletal health, advocating vigorously for the enhancement of patient care standards and broader access to essential orthopaedic services
- Champions of collaborative care as integral members of multidisciplinary teams, ensuring comprehensive, cohesive care for patients with musculoskeletal conditions, optimizing outcomes through effective collaboration and service integration
- Innovators in technology, seamlessly integrating the latest technological advancements and digital health solutions into care delivery and patient education, driving significant improvements in patient outcomes and engagement
- Global health advocates through international collaborations and initiatives, contributing to the global evolution of orthopaedic nursing, sharing knowledge and practices that elevate care standards worldwide

In their multifaceted roles as caregivers, consultants, educators, researchers, administrators, and primary healthcare providers, advanced practice orthopaedic nurses lead the charge in enhancing musculoskeletal healthcare. By educating communities on health promotion and preventing injuries, they play a pivotal role in making healthcare more accessible and affordable, demonstrating the profound impact of advanced nursing practice on health care (NCSBN, 2008; NONPF, 2021; NONPF 2022).

VALUE

“The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses promotes a culture of professional collaboration developed through trust, respect, integrity, and passion for the specialty of orthopaedics” (NAON Value Statement, 2024). Specialized orthopaedic knowledge enhances the nurse’s ability to:

- Serve as an advocate for patients and families in the various care delivery settings
- Provide competent care, anticipating specific patient needs and potential problems throughout the health care continuum
- Represent nurses as a vital link in the interdisciplinary collaboration process with patients, families and other health care providers
- Provide consistent delivery of care that ensures health care opportunities for all consumers



The expanded knowledge and proficiency of orthopaedic nurses play a pivotal role in advancing the prevention and early detection of complications, significantly contributing to the reduction of healthcare costs. This is achieved through:

- Prompt and precise recognition of patient requirements, ensuring that care is both necessary and appropriate.
- The implementation of efficient healthcare delivery models, optimizing resources and patient care pathways.
- The development and execution of timely and relevant health education, maintenance, and prevention initiatives, tailored to individual patient needs and community health goals.

Advanced practice orthopaedic nurses, serving as primary healthcare providers, are instrumental in elevating the quality of accessible and cost-effective healthcare for a diverse range of consumers. Their expertise in specialized care not only enhances patient outcomes but also fosters a more sustainable and equitable healthcare system by integrating innovative care strategies, evidence-based practices, and patient-centered approaches.

REFERENCES

- American Nurses Association. (2021). Standards of clinical nursing practice (4th ed.). Washington, D.C.: ANA. American Nurses Association website: www.nursingworld.org.
- Chen, K., Rascoe, A., Su, C. et al. (2023) Value Challenge: A Bottoms-Up Approach to Minimizing Cost and Waste in Orthopaedic Surgery. JB JS Open Access. 12;8(2):e22.00129. doi: 10.2106/JBJS.OA.22.00129. PMID: 37063931; PMCID: PMC10090794.
- Harvey, C., David, J., Eckhouse, D., et al. (2013). NAON Scope and Standards of Orthopaedic Nursing Practice, 3rd ed, Orthopaedic Nursing, 32(3), 139-152.
- Kneale, J. & Davis, P. (2005). Orthopaedic and Trauma Nursing (2nd ed.). New York: Churchill Livingstone.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). (2021). *The future of nursing 2020-2030: Charting a path to achieve health equity*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25982>
- National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses [NAON] (2022) Core Curriculum for Orthopaedic Nursing: 8th Edition. SN - 9780979040863
- National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses [NAON] (2024), Value Statement. Retrieved from: <https://www.orthonurse.org/About/About>
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing [NCSBN] (2008). Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification & Education. Retrieved from: https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/Consensus_Model_for_APRN_Regulation_July_2008.pdf
- National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties [NONPF] (2021), Statement on Acute Care and Primary Care NP Practice. Retrieved from: https://www.nonpf.org/resource/resmgr/statements_papers/20211114_Statement_on_AC_P.pdf
- National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties [NONPF], (2022). National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties'



Nurse Practitioner Role Core Competencies.
<https://www.nonpf.org/page/1>.

Scott Fowler, J.M., Stephan, A., & Case, K. (2019). Orthopaedic Nurse Navigator. *Orthopaedic Nursing*, 38(6), 356-358.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/NOR.0000000000000607>

Smith, M.A., Smith, W.T., Atchley, D., Atchley, L. (2021). Total knee arthroplasty in the ambulatory surgery center setting: Best practices for cost containment and clinical care delivery. *Orthopaedic Nursing*, 40(1), 7-13.

Turcotte, J., Menon, N., Andersen, K., Stone, D., Patton, C. (2021). The impact of nurse navigator-led preoperative education on hospital outcomes following posterolateral lumbar fusion surgery. *Orthopaedic Nursing*, 40(5), 281-289
<http://doi.org.10.1097/NOR.0000000000000787>

