CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
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I PREAMBLE

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for nurses and midwives identifies core values for the nursing profession and establishes the standards of conduct that are reasonably expected of all nurses/midwives in practice. This Code replaces the previous Singapore Nursing Board Code of Conduct for nurses and midwives (1993).

The Code serves as a guide to assist the ethical decisions faced by practising nurses/midwives and provides a framework for the regulation of nursing practice in Singapore. It also acts as the basis for continuing education, self-evaluation and peer review.

The Code comprises 10 value statements that have been elaborated into ethical practice points for reference and action. The Code is divided into three sections:

- Nurses/Midwives and their clients
- Nurses/Midwives and their practice
- Nurses/Midwives and their profession

Nurses/Midwives and their clients

The nurse/midwife’s primary responsibility is to the clients they care for. Nurses/midwives should provide care according to their clients’ individual needs, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, age, social or economic status. Nurses/midwives shall respect their clients’ values and autonomy. They should advocate on their clients’ behalf when necessary.
Nurses/Midwives and their Practice

Nurses/midwives are responsible for providing the highest standards of nursing care and ethical practice possible within any given situation. They should be familiar with the profession’s ethical stance on such issues as practice accountability, preservation of confidentiality, skills competency and the maintenance of client privacy and dignity.

Nurses/Midwives and their Profession

All nurses/midwives are responsible for maintaining and enhancing the reputation of the profession. Nurses/midwives should act at all times in accordance with ethical healthcare practices, actively promote nursing ethics, and foster public trust and confidence in the nursing profession.

This Code requires every nurse/midwife to uphold the values outlined and elaborated in this document. It calls upon them to practice self-regulation, exercise professional accountability and respect the ethics of nursing practice. This document also provides examples of professional misconduct which may be subject to disciplinary action by the Singapore Nursing Board (SNB).

The Code supplements the requirements of the Nurses and Midwives Act and Regulations. It will be reviewed periodically by the Singapore Nursing Board.

REGISTRAR
SINGAPORE NURSING BOARD
15 March 1999
II   CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

A   NURSES/MIDWIVES AND THEIR CLIENTS

Value Statement 1 : Respect clients’ individual values and needs.

Nurses/midwives shall provide care that is determined by their clients’ values and needs, without any discrimination on the basis of the clients’ gender, ethnicity, religion, age, social or economic status.

Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

1.1 assist clients to express their individual needs and values, and take these into consideration when determining the optimal plan of care.

1.2 actively involve their clients in the planning and delivery of care.

1.3 provide care regardless of clients’ gender, ethnicity, religion, age, health and socio-economic status.

Value Statement 2 : Respect and promote clients’ autonomy.

Nurses/midwives shall respect the clients’ right for self-determination and provide them with whatever information they require to make informed decisions concerning their own care.
Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

2.1 inform clients about the nursing care options that are available.
2.2 assist clients in obtaining the necessary information from appropriate sources, when what is required is beyond the nurse/midwife’s scope.
2.3 respect the informed decision of competent clients to accept or refuse care.
2.4 obtain consent for nursing interventions where necessary and collaborate with other members of the health care team to obtain consent for medical treatment. When clients are incapable of making informed choices, consent should be sought from family members or significant others.
2.5 provide appropriate care until alternative arrangements are made, if the nurse/midwife is unable to comply with the client’s requests because they run contrary to the law or the nurse’s moral beliefs.

Value Statement 3 : Respect clients’ right to confidentiality.

Nurses/midwives shall maintain the confidentiality of all information relating to the health of their clients, obtained in the course of providing nursing care.

Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

3.1 safeguard the confidentiality of all client-related information.
3.2 disclose confidential information only as authorized by the client, unless there is risk of harm to the client or other persons, or when there is a legal obligation to disclose the information.
3.3 maintain the anonymity of clients when disclosing confidential information in circumstances other than that stated in 3.2.

Value Statement 4: Respect and preserve clients’ privacy and dignity.

Nurses/midwives shall protect the privacy and dignity of their clients, ensuring that client self-respect and self-esteem do not suffer as a consequence of any commission or omission of nursing care.

Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

4.1 provide nursing care in a manner that preserves the clients’ privacy and dignity.

4.2 prevent or resolve any situation in which clients are not accorded privacy or dignity.

4.3 render appropriate care to support a dignified and peaceful death in cases where life can no longer be sustained.
Value Statement 5: Provide care in a responsible and accountable manner.

*Every nurse/midwife shall be responsible for ensuring that the client receives safe, effective and ethical care.*

**Ethical practice points**

Nurses/midwives shall

5.1 safeguard the health and safety of their clients against incompetent, unethical or illegal practices.

5.2 ensure that the safety of their clients is not jeopardised by the commission or omission of any nursing care activity.

5.3 alert the appropriate authority of any situations which may endanger the health or safety of clients or colleagues.

5.4 provide accurate and relevant information when speaking on nursing or health-related matters in public.

Value Statement 6: Maintain competency in the care of clients.

*Nurses/midwives shall constantly evaluate their levels of knowledge and skills as well as the effectiveness of nursing care they provide. They shall maintain their competency through continuing education and practise evidence-based nursing.*
Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

6.1 ensure that their nursing practice is based on the best available evidence in the current scientific literature
6.2 keep pace with advances and innovations in medicine by participating in continuing education activities.
6.3 practise critical reflection and self-evaluation to assess their levels of competence and effectiveness of care delivered.

Value Statement 7: Advocate in the best interest of clients.

Nurses/midwives shall always promote their clients’ interests.

Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

7.1 ensure clients’ interests and needs are recognized and considered by the entire healthcare team.
7.2 safeguard clients from undue coercion to accept or change a particular course of action, if they do not choose to do so voluntarily.
7.3 defend those clients who may be vulnerable and incapable of protecting their own interests.
Value Statement 8: Maintain a high ethical standard in the conduct of research.

Nurses/midwives shall ensure that research activities are conducted in accordance with sound ethical principles.

Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

8.1 ensure that research is conducted in a manner that does not cause harm to their clients or compromise the standards of care they receive.

8.2 respect their clients’ right to an informed and voluntary consent regarding participation in research, including the right to withdraw.

8.3 ensure that consent is obtained from a family member, guardian or person(s) legally authorised to make a decision, for those clients who are deemed incompetent.

8.4 ensure that their clients’ anonymity and confidentiality is maintained.

8.5 comply with the ethical guidelines for research issued by the hospital/institution.
Value Statement 9: Maintain a practice environment that is conducive to the provision of ethical healthcare.

*Nurses/midwives shall collaborate with their healthcare colleagues to maintain an ethical culture in the practice environment through mutual trust and respect for each other’s expertise.*

**Ethical practice points**

Nurses/midwives shall

9.1 respect the values of healthcare colleagues and collaborate with them to advocate ethical healthcare.
9.2 share knowledge and expertise to resolve ethical issues.
9.3 support the actions of colleagues who have protected their clients from incompetent, unsafe or unethical care.

Value Statement 10: Promote the profession’s ethical standards and maintain public trust in the nursing profession.

*Nurses and midwives shall maintain high ethical standards in their professional conduct and strive to preserve the public’s trust and confidence.*
Ethical practice points

Nurses/midwives shall

10.1 present the ethical perspective when serving in committees or participating in civic activities in their professional capacity.
10.2 advocate fairness when participating in the formulation of health policies or when supporting community and national efforts to meet the health needs of the public.
10.3 promote fair allocation and efficient use of resources.
10.4 provide assistance when an emergency situation arises outside of employment.
10.5 avoid letting financial considerations of one’s own practice, investments or other commitments influence the provision of care.
10.6 refrain from any form of canvassing or advertising that is incompatible with the ethical standards of the profession.
10.7 refrain from publicly endorsing the products or services of sponsoring companies when organising activities.
III PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

Professional misconduct is defined as any act of commission or omission that contravenes acceptable standards for professional and ethical nursing practice. Nurses/midwives responsible for any conduct that:

♦ causes harm to the client;
♦ abuses the professional relationship with the client;
♦ brings the nursing profession into disrepute;

may face disciplinary action by the Singapore Nursing Board.

Examples of professional misconduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Any breach of the professional values and standards as spelt out in the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and the Standards for Practice for Nurses and Midwives.

2. Any failure to uphold personal and professional integrity in one's practice, such as:

   a. falsifying records;
   b. abusing clients verbally, physically or emotionally;
   c. abusing the nurse-client relationship;
   d. signing or issuing a document containing false and misleading information in one’s professional capacity;
   e. practising whilst impaired by or suffering from substance abuse;
   f. misappropriating property from clients or workplace;
g. indulging in inappropriate relationships with clients;

h. indulging in inappropriate business practices;

i. committing an act regarded by the profession as dishonourable or unprofessional (e.g. tampering with medical certificates).

3. Any contravention of statutory requirements, such as:

a. practicing without any valid nursing registration and/or licences;

b. false assumption of titles or designations to deceive clients;

c. using another nurse/midwife’s name and/or registration in the course of providing or offering services to clients;

d. failure to comply with the provisions of the Nurses and Midwives Act or its Regulations, and orders as meted out by the SNB;

e. being convicted of any offence that may bear upon the nurse’s/midwife’s suitability to practise;

f. being found guilty of professional misconduct by other nursing regulatory bodies;

g. failure to appear before an inquiry convened by the SNB and/or co-operate with investigations carried out by the SNB.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Being answerable and responsible for the outcome of one’s professional actions (includes any judgement, decision or action taken or omitted in nursing practice). Nurses/midwives are accountable to the client, the employer and the Singapore Nursing Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Speaking up in favour or support of the client's interests and wishes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>The right of individuals to determine their own actions and destinies</td>
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<td>Client(s)</td>
<td>An individual or group who seeks or receives professional care or advice from a nurse/midwife</td>
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<td>Competence</td>
<td>Adequately qualified and skilled in performing nursing duties to at least the minimum standard required</td>
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<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>Ethical obligation to protect the privacy of clients’ personal information</td>
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<td>Consent</td>
<td>Permission given by clients for a procedure or action to be carried out upon them by their attending nurse/midwife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dignity</td>
<td>Treating the client with respect and consideration for his rights as an individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
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<td>Evidence-based</td>
<td>Refers to the process of</td>
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<tr>
<td>nursing</td>
<td>• reviewing current research findings (evidence) published in scientific journals or other data sources</td>
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<td>• evaluating the relevance of this evidence to current nursing practice</td>
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<td>• modifying existing practice where indicated</td>
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<td>• evaluating the impact of the modified practice</td>
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<td>Midwife</td>
<td>A person who has completed a course in midwifery and is licensed by the Singapore Nursing Board to practise as a Registered Midwife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>A person who has completed a pre-registration or pre-enrolment nursing course and is licensed by the Singapore Nursing Board to practise as a Registered Nurse or Enrolled Nurse</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Obligation to properly carry out duties which are expected of a nurse/midwife and for which they can be held accountable</td>
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<td>Significant others</td>
<td>Persons who play an influential role in the client’s life and well-being (e.g. guardian, caregiver, partner)</td>
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