



HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Position Statement for RN Practice

NC nursing law ([G.S.90-171.20\(7\)\(e\)](#)) states that the practice of the **registered nurse** includes “Collaborating with other health care providers in determining the appropriate health care for a patient but, subject to the provisions of medical law (G.S. 90-18.2)” only the Nurse Practitioner can prescribe a medical treatment regimen or make a medical diagnosis.

It is within the RN’s scope of practice to assess the health status of a client, consistent with [21 NCAC 36.0224 \(b\)](#). Therefore, it is within the RN’s scope of practice to interview, perform and document a history and physical exam for health screening purposes and/or for use by and at the request of a physician provided there are agency policies/procedures allowing this, she/he has received formal education/training in this activity with competency validation. The RN may perform a complete history and physical or components thereof including bimanual, breast and prostate exams. The documentation of findings must include the legal signature of the RN performing the exam. The purpose of performing this activity is to distinguish normal from abnormal findings only and to refer any abnormal findings to a higher level medical provider. It is **not** within the RNs scope of practice to make a medical diagnosis, identify medical problems; medical treatment plans or declare someone “free” of illness. *The legal scope of practice is the same for all registered nurses, whether employed by a hospital, by a physician, or other health care entity and cannot be expanded by another health professional.*

The Registered Nurse can extract information (including medical diagnoses) from the client’s medical plans of care, progress notes, and laboratory/diagnostic reports and prepare a discharge summary that is later validated by the attending physician.