

Administration of medications is within the scope of practice of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in the State of Minnesota as a delegated medical function. (See Minn. Stat. Sec. 148.171, subd. 14 and 15 (2008). Because nurses frequently administer medications, it may appear to be a routine activity. However, many medications have serious effects, even if administered correctly and within normal dose ranges. Therefore, it is the expectation of the Minnesota Board of Nursing that nurses will give careful consideration to each episode of medication administration and make a nursing judgment regarding whether the nurse may safely accept the delegation of medication administration under the given circumstances and specific setting.

Administration of medications classified as anesthetics for the purpose of procedural sedation and analgesia, requires particular attention.¹ The Institute for Safe Medication Practices has listed both propofol and ketamine as “High Alert” medications that “bear a heightened risk of causing significant patient harm when they are used in error.” A registered nurse may acquire the knowledge and skill required to administer these medications. Registered nurses who administer medications classified as anesthetics are accountable to:

- Adequately assess the patient prior to, during, and after administration of the medications. A baseline assessment will include, at a minimum, respiratory rate, oxygen saturation, blood pressure, cardiac rate and rhythm, and the patient’s level of consciousness. The components of the ongoing assessment of the patient will depend on the medications being administered and the condition of the patient with consideration given to the assessments identified above.
- Personally possess specialized nursing knowledge, judgment, skill and current clinical competence to manage the nursing care of the patient including:
 - Appropriate judgment in patient selection and screening.
 - Knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, cardiac arrhythmia recognition, oxygen delivery, respiratory physiology, transport and uptake.
 - Skill in utilization of oxygen delivery devices and airway management.
 - Familiarity with the medications to be administered including onset and duration of action, desired effects, normal dose range, route of administration, indications, contraindications, interactions with other medications, and possible side effects and adverse reactions.

¹ Utilizing appropriate, descriptive terminology is complicated by the properties of some medications and their effects. Propofol, for example, is classified by the Food and Drug Administration as a sedative/hypnotic at lower doses and an anesthetic agent when given at sufficiently high doses. While the phrase “medications classified as anesthetics” is used in this document, it should be understood that classification of medications may change and new medications may be developed. The accountability statement applies to other medications with anesthesia inducing properties, even if not classified as anesthetics. It should also be understood that the medications might be used for other purposes, including procedural sedation and analgesia. “Procedural sedation” includes moderate and deep sedation.

- Competent and safe administration of the medication by the specified route.
- Ability to anticipate and recognize potential complications of the medications being administered.
- Ability to recognize emergency situations and institute emergency procedures as appropriate to the patient condition and circumstance.
- Possess knowledge of the desired outcome of sedation.
- Exclude any other duties or responsibilities while administering medications for sedation and while the patient is sedated that would require leaving the patient unattended or compromise continuous monitoring of the patient by the nurse.
- Complete timely and thorough documentation.
- Provide clear, complete and culturally appropriate information to the patient or responsible party prior to, during, and following sedation.
- Ensure immediate availability of emergency and resuscitation personnel and equipment appropriate to the medications being administered and the age and condition of the patient.
- Verify the policies and procedures of the employing facility or organization permit administration of medications for sedation by a registered nurse.
- Ensure guidelines for patient monitoring, drug administration, and protocols for managing potential complications or emergency situations are available and have been developed and updated in accordance with accepted standards of anesthesia and nursing practice.
- Decline to administer medications classified as anesthetics or other medications if the registered nurse perceives the administration would be unsafe under the circumstances.
- Maintain safeguards for the appropriate management of controlled or abusable substances.
- Comply with all applicable Federal and state laws and rules. Under Minnesota Rule 4675.0500, only an anesthesiologist or qualified physician and/or anesthesiologist shall administer anesthetics other than local infiltration anesthetics.

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