

## Development of International Entry-Level Nursing Competencies to Address the Continuum of Substance Use

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**Abstract :** Introduction: Substance use along the continuum from at-risk use to a substance use disorder (SUD) contributes substantially to the burden of disease and related harms worldwide. There is a growing body of literature that highlights the lack of substance use related content in nursing curricula. Furthermore, there is also a lack of consensus on key competencies necessary for entry-level nurses. Globally, there is a lack of established nursing competencies related to prevention, health promotion, harm reduction and treatment of at-risk substance use and SUDs. At a critical time in public health, this gap in nursing curricula contributes to a lack of preparation for entry-level nurses to support people along the continuum of substance use. Thus, in practice, early opportunities for screening, support, and interventions may be missed. To address this gap, an international committee was convened to develop international entry-level nursing competencies specifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities that all nurses should possess in order to address the continuum of substance use. Methodology: An international steering committee, including representation from Canada, United States, United Kingdom, and Australia was established to lead this work over a one-year time period. The steering committee conducted a scoping review, undertaken to examine nursing competency frameworks, and to inform a competency structure that would guide this work. The next steps were to outline key competency areas and establish leaders for working groups to develop the competencies. In addition, a larger international committee was gathered to contribute to competency working groups, review the collective work and concur on the final document. Findings: A comprehensive framework was developed with competencies covering a wide spectrum of substance use across the lifespan and in the context of prevention, health promotion, harm reduction and treatment, including special populations. The development of this competency-based framework meets an identified need to provide guidance for universities, health authorities, policy makers, nursing regulators and other organizations that provide and support nursing education which focuses on care for patients and families with at-risk substance use and SUDs. Conclusion: Utilizing these global competencies as expected outcomes of an educational and skill building curricula for entry-level nurses holds great promise for incorporating evidence-informed training in the care and management of people across the continuum of substance use.

**Keywords :** addiction nursing, addiction nursing curriculum, competencies, substance use

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