

Louisiana State Board of Nursing

Mrs. Margie D. Gibbs, R.N.
President

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New Orleans, Louisiana, 70112-2382
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Miss Merlyn M. Mallifan, R.N.
Executive Director

April 2, 1984

Mona J. Romaine, R.N., B.S.
Director of Health Care Service
Medical Personnel Pool
4744 Jamestown Avenue, Suite 102
Baton Rouge, La. 70808

Dear Ms. Romaine:

This is to provide you with written confirmation of the response of the Board of Nursing to your question regarding the legality of the R.N. removing the inner and outer cannulas of a tracheostomy in a home situation. On March 23, 1984, you explained to the Board that your question was precipitated by a physician's order to change the inner and outer tracheostomy cannulas twice daily on a home care patient.

Rather than issuing an opinion on the specific procedure in question, the Board arrived at a consensus of an opinion which you can use in this situation and in similar future situations. The opinion is as follows:

In a given situation, a registered nurse should assess the patient and use nursing judgment, based on his/her competency, as to whether or not (s)he will carry out an order or perform a procedure.

Considering the possible complications of the procedure, the nurse must be adequately prepared to intervene in the event of any complication.

The Nurse Practice Act, L.R.S. 37:913 (3), provides that executing medical regimes as prescribed by a licensed physician or dentist is a legal function of nursing. However, this does not negate the registered nurse's responsibility to exercise professional judgment. Rules R.N. 1.061, (2), 6) and 7) provide, among the causes for disciplinary action against a registered nurse, performing procedures beyond the authorized scope of nursing and performing duties and assuming responsibilities within the scope of the definition of nursing practice when competency has not been achieved or maintained, or where competency has not been achieved or maintained in a particular specialty.

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The Board appreciated the opportunity to discuss your situation with you on March 23, 1984.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Lucie Leonard".

Sister Lucie Leonard, R.N.
Nursing Practice Consultant

SELL:sl