



Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa  
Nursing Council of New Zealand

# Competencies for registered nurses

*Te whakarite i nga mahi tapuhi kia tiakina ai te  
haumarū a-iwi*

*Regulating nursing  
practice to protect public safety*

December 2007

Nursing Council of New Zealand  
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## Registered nurse scope of practice

Registered nurses utilise nursing knowledge and complex nursing judgment to assess health needs and provide care, and to advise and support people to manage their health. They practise independently and in collaboration with other health professionals, perform general nursing functions, and delegate to and direct enrolled nurses, health care assistants and others. They provide comprehensive assessments to develop, implement, and evaluate an integrated plan of health care, and provide interventions that require substantial scientific and professional knowledge, skills and clinical decision making. This occurs in a range of settings in partnership with individuals, families, whānau and communities. Registered nurses may practise in a variety of clinical contexts depending on their educational preparation and practice experience. Registered nurses may also use this expertise to manage, teach, evaluate and research nursing practice. Registered nurses are accountable for ensuring all health services they provide are consistent with their education and assessed competence, meet legislative requirements and are supported by appropriate standards. There will be conditions placed in the scope of practice of some registered nurses according to their qualifications or experience limiting them to a specific area of practice. Some nurses who have completed the required additional experience, education and training will be authorised by the Council to prescribe some medicines within their competence and area of practice. The Nursing Council Competencies for Registered Nurses describe the skills and activities of registered nurses.



# Domains of competence

There are four domains of competence for the registered nurse scope of practice. Evidence of safety to practise as a registered nurse is demonstrated when the applicant meets the competencies within the following domains:

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### Domain one:

#### **Professional responsibility**

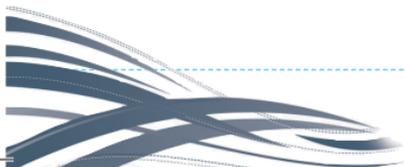
This domain contains competencies that relate to professional, legal and ethical responsibilities and cultural safety. These include being able to demonstrate knowledge and judgement and being accountable for own actions and decisions, while promoting an environment that maximises health consumer safety, independence, quality of life and health.

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### Domain two:

#### **Management of nursing care**

This domain contains competencies related to assessment and managing health consumer care, which is responsive to the consumers' needs, and which is supported by nursing knowledge and evidence based research.



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**Domain three:****Interpersonal relationships**

This domain contains competencies related to interpersonal and therapeutic communication with health consumers, other nursing staff and interprofessional communication and documentation.

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**Domain four:****Interprofessional health care & quality improvement**

This domain contains competencies to demonstrate that, as a member of the health care team, the nurse evaluates the effectiveness of care and promotes a nursing perspective within the interprofessional activities of the team.



## Competencies and indicators

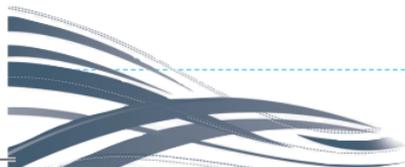
The competencies in each domain have a number of key generic examples of competence performance called indicators. These are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive; rather they provide examples of evidence of competence. The indicators are designed to assist the assessor when using his/her professional judgement in assessing the attainment of the competencies.

The indicators further assist curriculum development for bachelors' degrees in nursing or first year of practice programmes.

Registered nurses are required to demonstrate competence. They are accountable for their actions and take responsibility for the direction of enrolled nurses and others.

The competencies have been designed to be applied to registered nurse practice in a variety of clinical contexts. They take into account the contemporary role of the registered nurse, who utilises nursing knowledge and complex nursing judgement to assess health needs, provide care, and advise and support people to manage their health. The registered nurse practises independently and in collaboration with other health professionals. The registered nurse performs general nursing functions, and delegates to, and directs enrolled nurses and others.

The registered nurse also provides comprehensive nursing assessments to develop, implement, and evaluate an integrated plan of health care, and provides nursing interventions that require



substantial scientific and professional knowledge and skills. This occurs in a range of settings in partnership with individuals, families, whanau and communities.

The nursing student is expected to be supervised in practice by a registered nurse when the competencies relate directly to an undergraduate nursing student. Nursing students are assessed against all competencies on an ongoing basis, and will be assessed for entry to the registered nurse scope of practice at the completion of their programme.



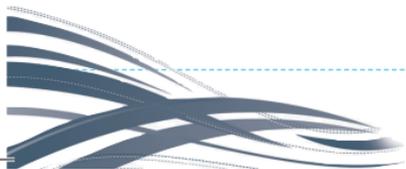
### Nurses involved in management, education, policy and research

The competencies also reflect the scope statement that some registered nurses use their nursing expertise to manage, teach, evaluate and research nursing practice.

Registered nurses, who are not practising in direct care, are exempt from those competencies in domain two (management of nursing care) and domain three (interpersonal relationships) that are only apply to clinical practice. There are specific competencies in these domains for nurses working in management, education, policy and/or research. These are included at the end of domains two and three. Nurses who are assessed against these specific competencies are required to demonstrate how they contribute to practice.

Those practising in direct care and in management, education, policy and/or research must meet both sets of competencies.

**Note:** Please read the glossary of terms on page 32 of this document.



## Domain one: Professional responsibility

### Competency 1.1

Accepts responsibility for ensuring that his/her nursing practice and conduct meet the standards of the professional, ethical and relevant legislated requirements.

**Indicator:** Practises nursing in accord with relevant legislation/codes/policies and upholds health consumers rights derived from that legislation.

**Indicator:** Accepts responsibility for actions and decision making within scope of practice.

Indicator: Identifies breaches of law that occur in practice and reports them to the appropriate person(s).

Indicator: Demonstrates knowledge of, and accesses, policies and procedural guidelines that have implications for practice.

Indicator: Uses professional standards of practice.



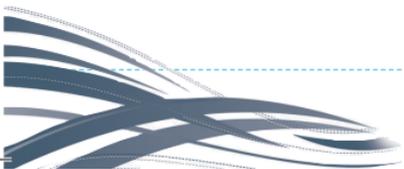
## Competency 1.2

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Te Tiriti o Waitangi to nursing practice.

**Indicator:** Understands the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its relevance to the health of Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Indicator: Demonstrates knowledge of differing health and socio-economic status of Māori and non-Māori.

Indicator: Applies the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi to nursing practice.



### Competency 1.3

Demonstrates accountability for directing, monitoring and evaluating nursing care that is provided by enrolled nurses and others.

**Indicator:** Understands accountability for directing, monitoring and evaluating nursing care provided by enrolled nurses and others.

**Indicator:** Seeks advice from a senior registered nurse if unsure about the role and competence of enrolled nurses and others when delegating work.

**Indicator:** Takes into consideration the role and competence of staff when delegating work.

**Indicator:** Makes appropriate decisions when assigning care, delegating activities and providing direction for enrolled nurses and others.



### Competency 1.4

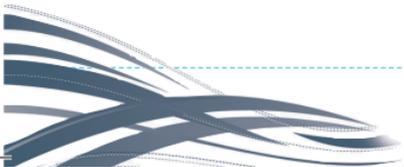
Promotes an environment that enables health consumer safety, independence, quality of life, and health.

**Indicator:** Identifies and reports situations that affect health consumers or staff members' health or safety.

**Indicator:** Accesses, maintains and uses emergency equipment and supplies.

**Indicator:** Maintains infection control principles.

**Indicator:** Recognises and manages risks to provide care that best meets the needs and interests of health consumers and the public.



## Competency 1.5

Practises nursing in a manner that the health consumer determines as being culturally safe.

**Indicator:** Applies the principles of cultural safety in own nursing practice.

Indicator: Recognises the impact of the culture of nursing on health consumers care and endeavours to protect the health consumers's wellbeing within this culture.

Indicator: Practises in a way that respects each health consumers's identity and right to hold personal beliefs, values and goals.

Indicator: Assists the health consumer to gain appropriate support and representation from those who understand the health consumer's culture, needs and preferences.

Indicator: Consults with members of cultural and other groups as requested and approved by the health consumers.

Indicator: Reflects on his/her own practice and values that impact on nursing care in relation to the health consumers's age, ethnicity, culture, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation and/or disability.

Indicator: Avoids imposing prejudice on others and provides advocacy when prejudice is apparent.



## Domain two: Management of nursing care

### Competency 2.1

Provides planned nursing care to achieve identified outcomes.

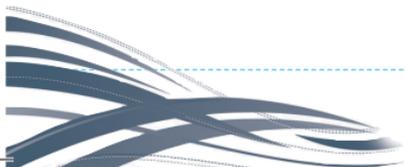
**Indicator:** Contributes to care planning, involving health consumers and demonstrating an understanding of health consumers' rights, to make informed decisions.

Indicator: Demonstrates understanding of the processes and environments that support recovery.

Indicator: Identifies examples of the use of evidence in planned nursing care.

Indicator: Undertakes practice procedures and skills in a competent and safe way.

Indicator: Administers interventions, treatments and medications, (for example: intravenous therapy, calming and restraint), within legislation, codes and scope of practice; and according to authorised prescription, established policy and guidelines.



## Competency 2.2

Undertakes a comprehensive and accurate nursing assessment of health consumers in a variety of settings.

**Indicator:** Undertakes assessment in an organised and systematic way.

Indicator: Uses suitable assessment tools and methods to assist the collection of data.

Indicator: Applies relevant research to underpin nursing assessment.

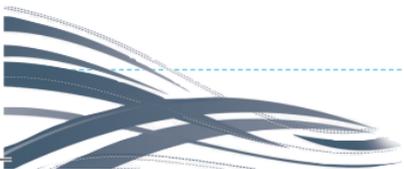


### Competency 2.3

Ensures documentation is accurate and maintains confidentiality of information.

**Indicator:** Maintains clear, concise, timely, accurate and current health consumer records within a legal and ethical framework.

Indicator: Demonstrates literacy and computer skills necessary to record, enter, store, retrieve and organise data essential for care delivery.



## Competency 2.4

Ensures the health consumer has adequate explanation of the effects, consequences and alternatives of proposed treatment options.

**Indicator:** Provides appropriate information to health consumers to protect their rights and to allow informed decisions.

Indicator: Assesses the readiness of the health consumers to participate in health education.

Indicator: Makes appropriate professional judgement regarding the extent to which the health consumer is capable of participating in decisions related to his/her care.

Indicator: Discusses ethical issues related to health care/nursing practice, (for example: informed consent, privacy, refusal of treatment and rights of formal and informal health consumers).

Indicator: Facilitates the health consumer's access to appropriate therapies or interventions and respects the health consumer's right to choose amongst alternatives.

Indicator: Seeks clarification from relevant members of the health care team regarding the individual's request to change and/or refuse care.

Indicator: Takes the health consumer's preferences into consideration when providing care.



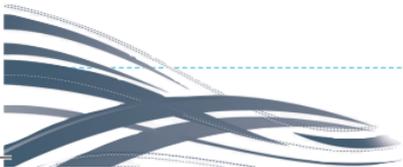
### Competency 2.5

Acts appropriately to protect oneself and others when faced with unexpected health consumer responses, confrontation, personal threat or other crisis situations.

**Indicator:** Understands emergency procedures and plans and lines of communication to maximise effectiveness in a crisis situation.

Indicator: Takes action in situations that compromise health consumer safety and wellbeing.

Indicator: Implements nursing responses, procedures and protocols for managing threats to safety within the practice environment.



## Competency 2.6

Evaluates health consumer's progress toward expected outcomes in partnership with health consumers.

**Indicator:** Identifies criteria for evaluation of expected outcomes of care.

Indicator: Evaluates the effectiveness of the health consumer's response to prescribed treatments, interventions and health education in collaboration with the health consumer and other health care team members. (Beginning registered nurses would seek guidance and advice from experienced registered nurses).

Indicator: Reflects on health consumer feedback on the evaluation of nursing care and health service delivery.



### Competency 2.7

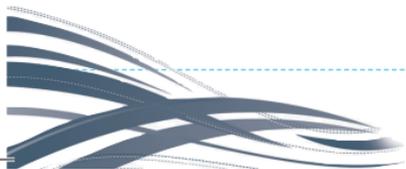
Provides health education appropriate to the needs of the health consumer within a nursing framework.

**Indicator:** Checks health consumers' level of understanding of health care when answering their questions and providing information.

**Indicator:** Uses informal and formal methods of teaching that are appropriate to the health consumer's or group's abilities.

**Indicator:** Participates in health education, and ensures that the health consumer understands relevant information related to their health care.

**Indicator:** Educates health consumer to maintain and promote health.



## Competency 2.8

Reflects upon, and evaluates with peers and experienced nurses, the effectiveness of nursing care.

**Indicator:** Identifies one's own level of competence and seeks assistance and knowledge as necessary.

**Indicator:** Determines the level of care required by individual health consumers.

**Indicator:** Accesses advice, assistance, debriefing and direction as necessary.



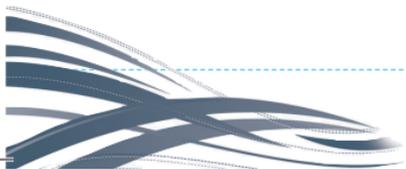
## Competency 2.9

### Maintains professional development.

**Indicator:** Contributes to the support, direction and teaching of colleagues to enhance professional development.

Indicator: Updates knowledge related to administration of interventions, treatments, medications and best practice guidelines within area of practice.

Indicator: Takes responsibility for one's own professional development and for sharing knowledge with others.



*Although nurses involved in management, education, research and policy making are exempt from being assessed against the above competencies in domain two, they are required to provide evidence of how they contribute to the management of care.*

### **Competencies for nurses involved in management:**

**Competency** Promotes an environment that contributes to ongoing demonstration and evaluation of competencies.

Competency Promotes a quality practice environment that supports nurses' abilities to provide safe, effective and ethical nursing practice.

Competency Promotes a practice environment that encourages learning and evidence-based practice.

Competency Participates in professional activities to keep abreast of current trends and issues in nursing.

### **Competencies for nurses involved in education:**

**Competency** Promotes an environment that contributes to ongoing demonstration and evaluation of competencies.

Competency Integrates evidence-based theory and best practice into education activities.

Competency Participates in professional activities to keep abreast of current trends and issues in nursing.



### Competencies for nurses involved in research:

**Competency** Promotes a research environment that supports and facilitates research mindedness and research utilisation.

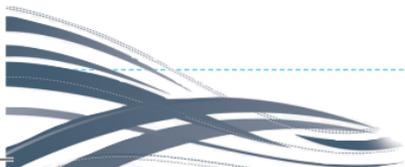
**Competency** Supports and evaluates practice through research activities and application of evidence based knowledge.

**Competency** Participates in professional activities to keep abreast of current trends and issues in nursing.

### Competencies for nurses involved in policy:

**Competency** Utilises research and nursing data to contribute to policy development, implementation and evaluation.

**Competency** Participates in professional activities to keep abreast of current trends and issues in nursing.



## Domain three: Interpersonal relationships

### Competency 3.1

Establishes, maintains and concludes therapeutic interpersonal relationships with health consumers.

**Indicator:** Initiates, maintains and concludes therapeutic interpersonal interactions with health consumers.

Indicator: Incorporates therapeutic use of self and psychotherapeutic communication skills as the basis for nursing care for health consumers with mental health needs.

Indicator: Utilises effective interviewing and counselling skills in interactions with health consumers.

Indicator: Demonstrates respect, empathy and interest in health consumer.

Indicator: Establishes rapport and trust with the health consumers.



### Competency 3.2

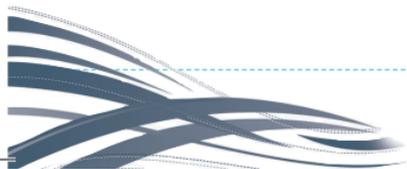
Practises nursing in a negotiated partnership with the health consumer where and when possible.

**Indicator:** Undertakes nursing care that ensures health consumers receive and understand relevant and current information concerning their health care that contributes to informed choice.

Indicator: Implements nursing care in a manner that facilitates the independence, self-esteem and safety of the health consumer and an understanding of therapeutic and partnership principles.

Indicator: Recognises and supports the personal resourcefulness of people with mental and/or physical illness.

Indicator: Acknowledges family/whanau perspectives and supports their participation in services.



### Competency 3.3

Communicates effectively with health consumers and members of the health care team.

**Indicator:** Uses a variety of effective communication techniques.

Indicator: Employs appropriate language to context.

Indicator: Provides adequate time for discussion.

Indicator: Endeavours to establish alternative communication methods when health consumers are unable to verbalise.

Indicator: Accesses an interpreter when appropriate.

Indicator: Discussions concerning health consumers are restricted to settings, learning situations and or relevant members of the health care team.

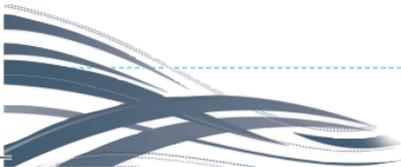


*Although nurses involved in management, education, research and policy making are exempted from being assessed against the above competencies in domain three, they are required to provide evidence of how they contribute to interpersonal relationships.*

### **Competencies for nurses involved in management, education, policy and research:**

**Competency** Establishes and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with others, including utilising effective interviewing and counselling skills and establishing rapport and trust.

Competency Communicates effectively with members of the health care team, including using a variety of effective communication techniques, employing appropriate language to context and providing adequate time for discussion.



## Domain four: Interprofessional healthcare and quality improvement

### Competency 4.1

Collaborates and participates with colleagues and members of the health care team to facilitate and coordinate care.

**Indicator:** Promotes a nursing perspective and contribution within the interprofessional activities of the health care team.

Indicator: Provides guidance and support to those entering as students, beginning practitioners and those who are transferring into a new clinical area.

Indicator: Collaborates with the health consumer and other health team members to develop plan of care.

Indicator: Maintains and documents information necessary for continuity of care and recovery.

Indicator: Develops a discharge plan and follow up care in consultation with the health consumer and other members of the health care team.

Indicator: Makes appropriate formal referrals to other health care team members and other health related sectors for health consumers who require consultation.



### Competency 4.2

Recognises and values the roles and skills of all members of the health care team in the delivery of care.

**Indicator:** Contributes to the co-ordination of care to maximise health outcomes for the health consumer.

Indicator: Collaborates, consults with and provides accurate information to the health consumer and other health professionals about the prescribed interventions or treatments.

Indicator: Demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of community services and resources and actively supports service users to use them.

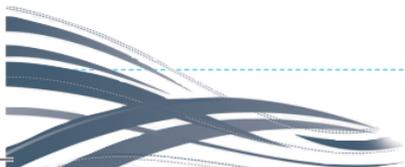
### Competency 4.3

Participates in quality improvement activities to monitor and improve standards of nursing.

**Indicator:** Reviews policies, processes, procedures based on relevant research.

Indicator: Recognises and identifies researchable practice issues and refers them to appropriate people.

Indicator: Distributes research findings that indicate changes to practice to colleagues.



## Registered nurses in expanded practice

Competencies have been developed to describe the skills and knowledge of nurses working in expanded practice roles i.e. nurses who are working in clinical roles that are at the boundaries of nursing practice such as first surgical assistants and nurse colposcopist. These competencies are additional to those that already describe the registered nurse scope of practice. A nurse working in an expanded practice role would need to meet both.

- *Demonstrates initial and ongoing knowledge and skills for specific expanded practice role/ activities through postgraduate education, clinical training and competence assessment.*
- *Participates in the evaluation of the outcomes of expanded practice, e.g. case review, clinical audit, multidisciplinary peer review.*
- *Intergrates and evaluates knowledge and resources from different disciplines and health-care teams to effectively meet the health care needs of individuals and groups.*

For more information on expanded practice please see *Guideline: Expanded practice for registered nurses* (2010) available on our website:

[www.nursingcouncil.org.nz](http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz)



## Glossary of terms

**Appropriate** Matching the circumstances of a situation or meeting the needs of the individual or group.

**Assessment** A systematic procedure for collecting qualitative and quantitative data to describe progress and ascertain deviations from expected outcomes and achievements.

**Attributes** Characteristics which underpin competent performance.

**Benchmark** Essential standard.

**Competence** The combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and abilities that underpin effective performance as a nurse.

**Competent** The person has competence across all domains of competencies applicable to the nurse, at a standard that is judged to appropriate for the level of nurse being assessed.

**Competency** A defined area of skilled performance.

**Context** The setting/environment where competence can be demonstrated or applied.

**Cultural Safety** The effective nursing practice of a person or family/whanau from another culture, and is determined by that person or family. Culture includes, but is not restricted to, age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, occupation and socio-economic status, ethnic origin or migrant experience, religious or spiritual belief, and disability.

The nurse delivering the nursing care will have undertaken a process of reflection on their own cultural identity and will recognise the impact that their personal culture has on their professional practice. Unsafe cultural practice comprises any



action which diminishes, demeans or disempowers the cultural identity and wellbeing of an individual.

**Domain** An organised cluster of competencies in nursing practice.

**Effective** Having the intended outcome.

**Enrolled nurse** A nurse registered under the enrolled nurse scope of practice.

**Expanded practice** Expanding the boundaries of nursing practice occurs as a professional strategy in response to a changing health care need with increased range of autonomy, accountability and responsibility.

There is a formal pathway to role expansion that entails further education and credentialing.

**Health Consumer** An individual who receives nursing care or services. This term represents patient, client, resident or disability consumer. This term is used in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003)

**Indicator** Key generic examples of competent performance. They are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. They assist the assessor when using their professional judgement in assessing nursing practice. They further assist curriculum development.

**Legislated** Those requirements laid down by New Zealand Acts and Regulations.

**Nurse** A registered nurse, nurse practitioner or enrolled nurse.

**Nursing Council of New Zealand** The responsible authority for nurses in New Zealand with legislated functions under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.



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The Nursing Council of New Zealand governs the practice of nurses by setting and monitoring standards of registration which ensures safe and competent care for the public of New Zealand.

As the statutory authority, the Council is committed to enhancing professional excellence in nursing.

**Nursing Practice** Using nursing knowledge in a direct relationship with clients or working in nursing management, nursing administration, nursing education, nursing research, nursing professional advice or nursing policy development roles, which impact on public safety

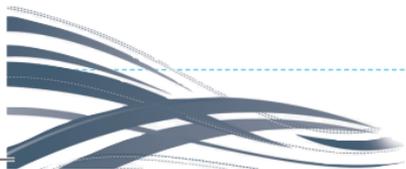
**Performance criteria** Descriptive statements which can be assessed and which reflect the intent of a competency in terms of performance, behaviour and circumstance.

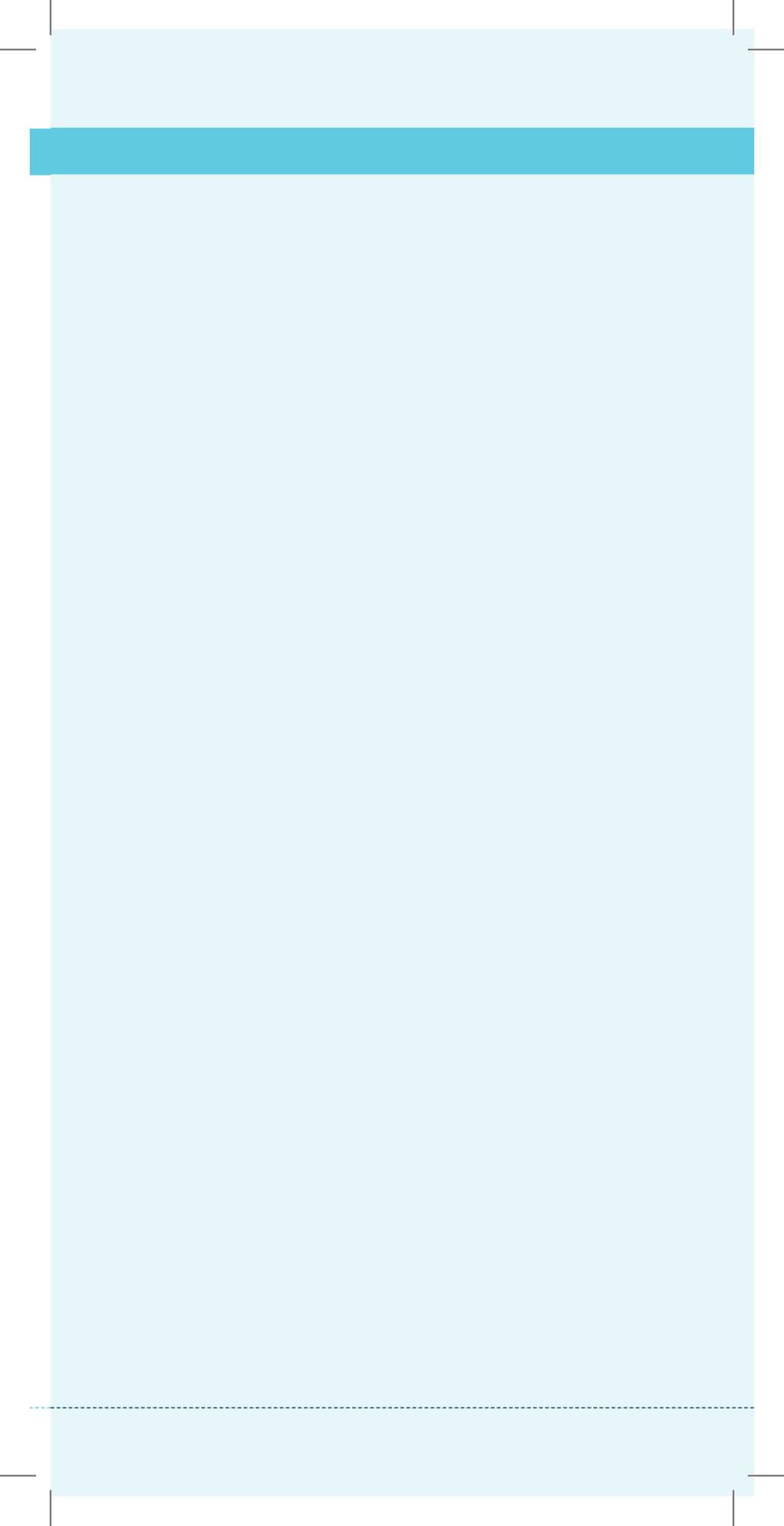
**Registered nurse** A nurse registered under the registered nurse scope of practice.

**Reliability** The extent to which a tool will function consistently in the same way with repeated use.

**Treaty of Waitangi** The founding document for Aotearoa/New Zealand signed in 1840 by the Māori people and the British Crown.

**Validity** The extent to which a measurement tool measures that which it purports to measure.







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