

The Nursing Process: advances with the new COFEN resolution

O Processo de Enfermagem: avanços com a nova resolução do COFEN

El Proceso de Enfermería: avances con la nueva resolución del COFEN

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On January 17, 2024, the Federal Nursing Council (Cofen) published Cofen Resolution No. 736, which "Provides for the implementation of the Nursing Process (NP) in all socio-environmental contexts where nursing care takes place"⁽¹⁾. This resolution comes into effect on the date of its publication, revoking any contrary provisions, particularly Cofen Resolution No. 358/2009, which addressed "The Systematization of Nursing Care (SNC) and the implementation of the NP in public or private settings where professional nursing care occurs, and other provisions"⁽²⁾.

It is important to highlight that the new resolution focuses exclusively on the Nursing Process. This is a significant milestone since the historical development of the SNC concept indicates an overlap with the NP, treating them as synonyms and making comprehension difficult. However, the concepts of SNC and NP are distinct from a theoretical, conceptual, and operational standpoint⁽³⁾.

Resolution 358 of 2009 considered that SNC should organize professional work in terms of method, personnel, and tools, making the operationalization of NP possible⁽²⁾. However, it did not provide a conceptual or operational definition of SNC, method, personnel, or tools. SNC comprises attributes that characterize it as a field of knowledge related to nursing service management and/or administration. It represents a customization of Brazilian nursing in terms of organizing and managing nursing services⁽⁴⁾.

Particularly due to the weak consensus on its structural elements and definitions, a previous study indicates that the SNC concept remains partially mature, presenting managerial/organizational attributes and multiple definitions, leading to its current status as vague and ambiguous⁽⁵⁾.

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Conversely, the NP is an internationally recognized concept that represents the way nursing is practiced, employing scientific knowledge in clinical practice. It is a methodological tool that guides professional nursing care and the documentation of professional practice⁽²⁾. This method directs the nurse's critical thinking and clinical judgment, guiding the nursing team in providing care to individuals, families, communities, and special groups. It is organized into five interrelated, interdependent, recurrent, and cyclical steps: Nursing Assessment, Nursing Diagnosis, Nursing Planning, Nursing Implementation, and Nursing Evaluation⁽¹⁾.

Cofen Resolution No. 736/2024 mandates that the NP must be based on theoretical support, which can be interconnected. Likewise, nursing diagnoses, outcomes, indicators, interventions, and actions/activities may be supported by Standardized Nursing Language Systems, institutional protocols, and the best levels of scientific evidence⁽¹⁾.

Regarding the NP steps, there is an update in the nomenclature of certain phases to better align with clinical practice and scientific terminology. The first step is now called Nursing Assessment, a term that better encompasses the entire process of gathering information on nursing care needs and health aspects relevant to practice. The final step is termed Nursing Evaluation, a term routinely used by nursing professionals in practice⁽¹⁾.

Additionally, the resolution provides detailed guidance on the third step, Nursing Planning, outlining steps for developing the care plan, and the fourth step, Nursing Implementation, which stipulates that planned interventions, actions, and activities may be based on the following standards: Nursing Care Standards, Interprofessional Care Standards, and Health Program Care Standards⁽¹⁾.

The new resolution also defines the responsibilities of the nursing team and introduces changes regarding care management and NP documentation. The NP must be formally recorded in the patient's chart, either physically or electronically, and the execution of nursing prescriptions must be verified⁽¹⁾.

Furthermore, it encourages nursing professionals and healthcare institutions to seek the necessary means for training and qualification in the use of the NP, as well as continuous education and training at the technical, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels. These educational levels should include topics that enhance the qualifications of professionals for NP implementation⁽¹⁾.

The main advancements in Cofen Resolution No. 736 include: its exclusive focus on the Nursing Process; the update in nomenclature for the first step – Nursing Assessment; the detailed explanation of the third step – Nursing Planning and the fourth step – Nursing Implementation; and the revision of the final step, now designated as Nursing Evaluation. It defines the nursing team's responsibilities in terms of collaboration, NP documentation, and verification of nursing prescriptions. Additionally, it encourages nursing professionals and healthcare institutions to seek training and qualification in NP implementation, as well as the inclusion of NP-related topics in the training of professionals at the technical,

undergraduate, and postgraduate levels⁽¹⁾.

Cofen Resolution No. 736 facilitates advancements in nursing practice within the Brazilian context, making it essential to widely disseminate information and provide training to nursing professionals for the effective implementation of the NP.

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