

Guidance for Nurses and Midwives with Serious Contagious/Infectious Diseases

SEPTEMBER 2004



An Bord Altranais

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An Bord Altranais states:

... "The nursing profession demands a high standard of professional behaviour from its members and each registered nurse is accountable for his or her practice;

... Any circumstances which could place patients/clients in jeopardy or which militate against safe standards of practice, should be made known to appropriate persons or authorities;

... The nurse must at all times take reasonable precautions to ensure that from the point of view of his/her health he/she is competent to carry out his/her duties..."

The Code of Professional Conduct for Each Nurse and Midwife, April 2000.

An Bord Altranais states:

"Accountability is the cornerstone of professional nursing and midwifery practice. Nurses and midwives are accountable both legally and professionally for their practice. Nurses and midwives are accountable to the patient/client, the public, their regulatory body, their employer and any relevant supervisory authority. It should be noted that accountability applies to both actions and omissions."

The Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework, April 2000.

The following guidelines reflect the need to protect patients, to retain the confidence of the public, and to provide safeguards for the nursing profession.

A nurse or midwife who believes that he/she may have been exposed to, or be infected with, any serious contagious/infectious disease, should

1. Seek specialist medical advice and diagnostic testing. It is unethical for a nurse or midwife to continue to practice when he/she thinks they may be putting patients at risk.
2. Adhere to the specialist medical advice received. If the diagnostic test is positive, the nurse or midwife must follow specialist medical advice on how his/her professional practice may be limited in order to protect patients/clients.
3. Consider carefully his/her personal/professional accountability as defined in *The Code of Professional Conduct for Each Nurse and Midwife*, and the *Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework* : An Bord Altranais April 2000.
4. Failure to follow specialist medical advice would be in breach of the nurse's/midwife's ethical duty of care and may amount to professional misconduct.



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