



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

Mark Sanford
Governor

Adrienne Riggins Youmans
Director

South Carolina Board of Nursing

110 Centerview Drive
Post Office Box 12367
Columbia, SC 29211-12367
Phone: (803) 896-4550
FAX: (803) 896-4525
www.llr.state.sc.us

ADVISORY OPINION # 15

FORMULATED: July 31, 1987

REVISED: May 1993 July 2007
August 2001

REVIEWED: March 1992 July 2005
January 1997 May 2006
July 1998

QUESTION: Is it within the role and scope of responsibilities of the registered nurse (RN) in the emergency department of a health care agency to be responsible for patient triage and discharge from the emergency department without physician order?

The Board of Nursing for South Carolina acknowledges that it is within the role and scope of responsibilities of the RN to perform patient triage in the Emergency Department. The nurse's responsibility for triage requires the use of judgment in identifying the patient's health problem and estimating its severity in determining priority of patient need.

Since it is not the role of the RN to establish medical diagnoses, it is therefore not within the role and scope of responsibilities of the RN to discharge patients from the Emergency Department without a physician's order. Only an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) may discharge from the emergency department working with collaborative written protocols from a physician preceptor.

This statement is an advisory opinion of the Board of Nursing as to what constitutes competent and safe nursing practice.