



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

South Carolina Board of Nursing

P.O. Box 12367 • Columbia, SC 29211

Phone: 803-896-4550 • Fax: 803-896-4515 • www.llronline.com/POL/nursing/



ADVISORY OPINION # 22

FORMULATED: January 29, 1988

REVISED: July 2007, September 2001, July 1993

REVIEWED: March 2011, May 2006, July 2005, November 2003, July 1998,
May 1997, May 1992

QUESTION: Is it within the role and scope of responsibility of the registered nurse (RN) to determine if a patient is in labor, and if the patient is not in labor to discharge the patient home, without consulting a physician?

The Board of Nursing for South Carolina acknowledges that it is within the scope and practice of the RN to assess and evaluate a patient for labor. The Board also acknowledges that the RN may NOT make medical diagnoses and therefore it is NOT within the role and scope of responsibility of the RN to discharge patients from the labor and delivery area without an order from the obstetrical care provider. Evaluating a patient for labor and discharging the patient after phone consultation with the provider is considered an additional act of the RN and requires special education and training. This special education and training should include documented safety practices and other didactic material as well as clinical skill competency components.

The Board recommends that the employing agency develop written policies and procedures after completion of a comprehensive literature review and consult clinical experts and legal counsel prior to allowing RN's to perform assessment to rule out labor.

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