

Brief Summary for the Guidelines for Decision-Making

1. **What are added nursing skills and how are they different from basic nursing skills?**

Basic nursing skills are taught in nursing programs, where students are provided with both the knowledge and clinical practice (under supervision) needed to perform skills safely and competently. Some examples would be: giving I.M. injections, doing dressing changes and applying heat or cold.

Added nursing skills are not taught in basic programs because they are required only in specialty areas of practice (e.g. outpost nursing or in some international circumstances). Some examples would include: suturing, communicating a diagnosis and even prescribing certain medications.

2. **I am a nursing student in an international setting where there is no physician nearby. How should I decide what added nursing skills are appropriate for me to carry out?**

The first step in making any decision is to assess the seriousness of the problem or need, then answer each of the following questions:

- a. **How predictable are the outcomes?** That is, how accurately can I predict the effect on the client(s) when the skill is performed competently?
- b. **What are the known risks to the client?** If the skill carries a high risk, even when performed competently, I must weigh that risk against the risks to the client of not performing the skill.
- c. **What knowledge, skill and judgment are required to carry out the skill?** Do I have that knowledge, skill and judgment? If not, did my basic preparation and/or later experience provide enough of a base to support the additional instruction that would enable me to perform the skill?
- d. **What resources, material and human, does the agency have available?** Are appropriate equipment and staff available for me to learn the skill? Can the agency provide the clinical practice required so that you can acquire initial competence?