



# Updating the Core Competencies for Home Health Nursing in Canada: A modified eDelphi study

The delivery of nursing care in the home requires a unique set of skills, with home health nurses often practicing alone and taking on a range of roles in unpredictable and unstructured physical work settings.<sup>1,2</sup> Research shows that nurses often face a challenging transition when entering home health practice.<sup>3</sup> It is important to support the home health workforce by ensuring home health nurses are well-equipped to handle the demands of nursing in home and community care.<sup>4</sup>

“The updated home health nursing competencies highlight the specific skills and expertise needed for home care and help empower and support staff who work in this area. They are a valuable tool for organizations to assess staff skills, identify areas for improvement, and create tailored training and resources that align with the changing demands of the job. By understanding these competencies, organizations can also better focus on recruitment and retention, ensuring the sector has the skilled workforce needed to continue delivering high-quality care.”

– Tricia Swartz, VP, Operational Excellence & Professional Practice, SE Health



## Project overview

Competence of care providers directly impacts client health outcomes and patient safety.<sup>5</sup> Home health is a specialty area of nursing practice involving the autonomous and asynchronous coordination and delivery of multi-disciplinary care in an unstructured and unpredictable environment. In 2010, the Community Health Nurses of Canada (CHNC) completed a project to articulate a set of nursing competencies specifically focused on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes required to support the safe and ethical delivery of home health nursing care.<sup>6</sup> Since then, several important changes to the home health environment have occurred. These changes include: rising use of digital health and telemedicine<sup>7</sup>; growing ethnocultural diversity in Canada<sup>8,9</sup>; and increasing client acuity seen in new models of hospital-at-home and transitional care programs.<sup>10</sup> These changes have prompted calls for review and updating of the competencies.

## What was the goal?

The aim of this participatory project was to update Canada’s home health nursing competencies to

reflect available evidence and the specific skills and expertise needed to provide care in the current home health practice environment.

## What have we done?

As part of our research portfolio investigating Health and Care Experiences, we partnered with CHNC to conduct an environmental scan and a modified eDelphi study engaging home health nurses and interdisciplinary home care team members from across the country to revise the 2010 Home Health Nursing Competencies.<sup>6</sup> An Advisory Working Group of 24 experts-by-experience (e.g., home health nursing leaders working in point-of-care, management, academic or research roles) guided project decision making and provided direct feedback on the competency generation process.

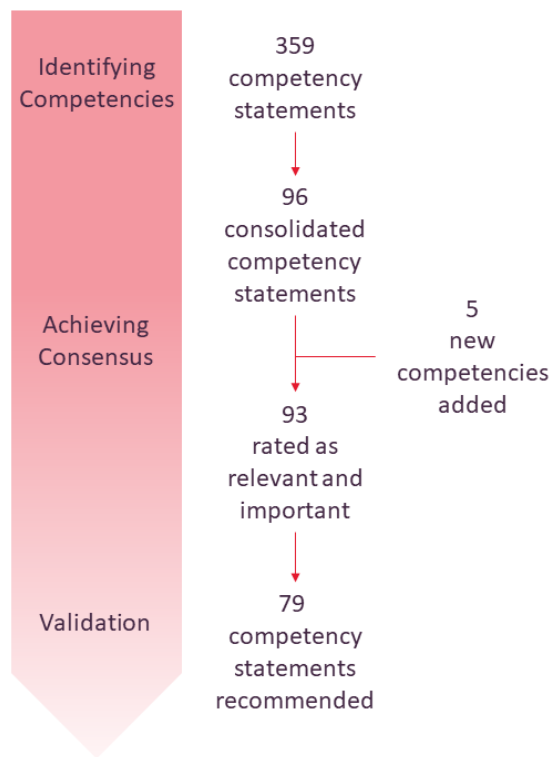
## What did we find?

### Identifying existing competencies

In January 2024 we completed an environmental scan of pre-existing competency statements, domains, and standards found in peer-reviewed literature and grey literature published by nursing organizations.

Over 300 pre-existing competency statements were reviewed across 5 sources.<sup>6,11-14</sup> Identified competency statements were organized using the 2019 Standards of Practice developed by CHNC<sup>12</sup> as a framework. New competency statements were drafted where overlap across multiple sources was noted, resulting in 96 unique competency statements for consultation (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1.** Competency selection process



### Engaging home health nurses to achieve consensus

A panel of 43 home health nurses representing point-of-care, operations/ management, and academic research/ education perspectives from 10 provinces participated in the eDelphi process. Across 3 rounds of surveys, nursing panel members were asked to rate the relevance and importance of each pre-existing competency identified in the environmental scan. Panel members also generated 5 additional competencies for consideration.

A total of 93 competency statements were identified as relevant to present-day home health nursing by 75% or more of the panel AND rated as either

“important” or “essential” to practice. These 93 competencies were included in a draft set of home health nursing competencies used to obtain feedback during additional consultations.

### Consultations and validation

To validate and refine the draft competencies generated from the nursing panel, further feedback was obtained from 12 interdisciplinary home care team members and 41 attendees at a pre-conference workshop focused on home health nursing competencies at the Community Health Nurses of Canada 2024 Annual Conference. **Based on these consultations and guidance from the Advisory Working Group, a final set of 79 competencies was generated.**

### What are the next steps?

The final set of 79 recommended Home Health Nursing Competencies were shared with CHNC and used to inform the **2024 Home Health Nursing Competencies in Canada published by CHNC.**<sup>15</sup>



Future research opportunities include further validation of competencies with diverse groups of home health nurses (e.g., nurses who identify as Indigenous) and co-creation and testing of strategies necessary to support implementation of the revised competencies in home health practice and nursing education (e.g., health human resource planning, curriculum development).

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### References