

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Board of Registration in Nursing

Module: Standards of Conduct
Case Study – APRN Practice without Appropriate Knowledge

Marie, a nurse practitioner, has an independent practice that shares an office with her collaborating physician for the past two years. The practice specializes in primary care of adults. She graduated from a Master's program in Gerontological nursing five years ago and became certified as an Gerontological Nurse Practitioner through American Nurse Credentialing Center. Since her graduation, she had worked in a clinic practice for three years before opening her own practice. To expand her clinic patient base, she sought additional continuing education and requested additional physician supervision to enhance her skills in the care of the middle aged adult.

Barbara, a patient well known to Marie, recently came into the office for a scheduled visit to monitor her hypertension and diabetes. Barbara's two year old grandson accompanied her to the appointment.

Barbara brought the toddler into the exam room with her and explained to Marie that she was caring for him that day as his usual caretaker was ill with the flu. Barbara's exam was essentially normal. Marie ordered some blood work and renewed prescriptions, giving instructions to wait until the blood work was done before filling them, just in case she would have to make a change. Marie discussed dietary concerns, preventative care issues, reminded Barbara to schedule her annual mammogram, scheduled a follow-up visit and updated Barbara's medical record.

As Barbara was leaving, she picked up her grandson and started toward the door. She noticed he was warm to touch and asked Marie to look at his ears as he had a history of ear infections. Marie examined the toddler's ears and diagnosed right otitis media. She wrote a prescription for Augmentin 500 mg twice daily after she was told the child had no allergies.

After having diarrhea, vomiting and progressive malaise for two days, the child was hospitalized with dehydration.

The Board of Registration in Nursing opened a complaint and, after a full investigation of the evidence, sanctioned Marie with a 1-Year Probation.

Case Study Questions:

1. What Standards of Conduct at 244 CMR 9.04 were violated?
2. How could Marie have avoided violating these standards?
3. What are the professional standards of care that were violated?