

A Competency Framework for Rheumatology Nurses: Registered Practitioner

Level of competency attainment guidance	Level

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Competency 1: Specialism knowledge				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Knowledge and understanding				
Develops underpinning knowledge of rheumatological conditions, associated comorbidities and differential diagnoses.				
Develops awareness of complex conditions such as autoimmune connective tissue diseases, vasculitis, rare metabolic bone disease or inherited connective tissue disease and treatment pathways.				
Develops knowledge of evidence-based treatment pathways such as Treating to Target, self-management strategies and national standards.				
Develops understanding of the main classifications of drug therapy including analgesia, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), immune modulatory drugs and corticosteroids.				
Develops an understanding of the impact of combination therapies, increases in dosage and the risks related to immunosuppression (especially in CYP).				
Develops understanding of bone health, including the importance of diet, vitamin D, micronutrients, exercise				

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Competency 2: Clinical assessment planning implementation and evaluation				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Knowledge and understanding				
Develops understanding of the importance of carrying out disease activity scoring and other outcome measures relevant to patient or condition.				
Develops understanding of normal body movements and factors which might alter these; including child development, delayed diagnosis and access to care.				
Understands the importance of correctly identifying and managing pain and develops an understanding of pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches.				
Knowledge of appropriate investigations according to agreed protocols.				
Develops awareness of the importance of potentially serious pathology (red flags) and reports to appropriate clinician.				
Understands risk assessment principles and care planning processes using a shared decision-making approach.				
Understands the specific risks from infections and takes appropriate action.				
Develops an understanding of the potential psychological and social implications of living with a rheumatological conditions.				
Understands the Health and Safety at Work Act, public health issues, services policies, procedures and protocols, local cytotoxic policy for administration of methotrexate and cyclophosphamide – including risk factors to mothers giving treatment to their children while pregnant.				
Develops knowledge of falls risk.				

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Skills and behaviours	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Complies with infection prevention procedures and is specifically aware of infection risks for rheumatology patients, especially those on immune modulating therapies.				
Can describe infection presentations specifically related to rheumatology.				
Identifies and supports patients to manage acute and chronic pain, referring to appropriate services.				
Ability to carry out venepuncture or cannulation if appropriate.				
Recognises unexpected findings from investigations and reports these appropriately.				
Proactively identifies adult and child safeguarding issues and reports appropriately.				

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Competency 4: Communication				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Knowledge and understanding				
Understands factors affecting self-management and evidence-based approaches to patient education.				
Develops an understanding of national guidance documents within the scope of rheumatology to support safe practice.				
Skills and behaviours	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Provides accurate information to patients, carers and families when starting treatment and importance of safe medication administration, in a developmentally appropriate manner.				
Describes approaches to diagnosis, treatments and ongoing monitoring to patients and their carers.				
Develops understanding of specific risk factors relating to rheumatology and Making Every Contact Count.				
Provides written contact information regarding rheumatology and home care delivery services and out of hours procedures and access.				
Ensures adequate provision of medication liaising with prescribers as needed.				
Participates in patient and carer teaching sessions.				

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Competency 5: Service delivery				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Knowledge and understanding				
Is aware of pathways used in rheumatology and follows them for patient care.				
Is aware of patient feedback mechanisms.				
Understands the importance of planned smooth transfer of care between primary, community and secondary care settings.				
Skills and behaviours	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Supports patients and carers to self-manage care as appropriate, and able to describe support systems in place accurately to patients and carers.				
Ability to manage clinical caseload safely, effectively and efficiently.				
Able to carry out clinical annual review using local protocol.				
Demonstrates excellent time keeping skills.				

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Competency 7: Leadership and development				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Knowledge and understanding				
Knows the vision, values, principles and policies of the organisation and how to access them.				
Skills and behaviours	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Awareness of importance of organisation goals.				
Able to undertake literature search and take part in research.				
Can undertake relevant literature search to access current evidence for clinical practice.				
Regularly attends professional forums, local teaching, regional network updates on treatments and maintains own knowledge and competence to meet professional standards, CPD and revalidation requirements.				

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