

GUIDE

Mastering Home Infusion Therapy with Comprehensive Training

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Learning Assessment



Supplementary Resources

- ↓ Supplementary Material Files
- ↓ Competency Checklist Files

Overview

The demand for home infusion therapy is rapidly increasing, driven by an aging population, a rise in chronic illnesses, and a growing preference for at-home care. However, this demand comes with its own set of challenges, such as the complexity of infusion procedures, a growing number of infusion drugs, heightened patient safety concerns, and regulatory pressures. As infusion procedures become more advanced, the risk of adverse events increases, making proper training and adherence to new standards essential.

The benefits of home infusion therapy are significant: It reduces healthcare costs, shortens hospital stays, and minimizes hospital readmissions. The practice has continued to evolve since its inception in the late 1970s, and today the global home infusion market is projected to grow by 11 percent annually through 2032, with North America leading the way.¹ The pandemic accelerated this growth, as patients sought treatment at home to minimize hospital exposure. As new biologic infusion drugs enter the market, many can be safely administered at home, given proper evaluation and safeguards.

IN THIS GUIDE WE'LL COVER:

- Why organizations providing home infusion therapy need to stay current with the INS Infusion Standards
- The real-world consequences of inadequate infusion therapy training
- How to improve clinician competence, ensure patient safety, and minimize the risk of rehospitalizations with comprehensive infusion therapy training

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Understanding the INS infusion standards

The Infusion Nurses Society (INS) has regularly published [Standards of Practice](#) since 1980, which provides recommendations for infusion and vascular access device care across various healthcare settings where infusions are administered. The *Standards of Practice* are developed by the INS Standards Committee, which I chaired in 2011, 2016, and 2021, and co-chaired in 2024.

The Standards include important recommendations specific to both insertion of vascular access devices and post-insertion care, addressing areas of concern such as dressings, securement devices, and catheter hub care with recommendations to reduce the risk of infection and other complications. For example, aseptic non-touch technique is an important framework for infection prevention that should be well understood by every home infusion nurse. The Standards also provide guidance in topics such as patient education, patient and clinician safety issues, quality improvement, and documentation.

Key Update in 2024: A New Standard Specific to Home Infusion Therapy

While relevant home care literature has always been cited in the *Standards of Practice*, the [2024 version](#) includes a new standard specific to home infusion therapy that provides evidence-based recommendations for patient selection, home safety issues, patient education, and complications associated with home infusion therapy.

Home health agencies must ensure that these updated standards are fully integrated into their policies and procedures. Failing to do so can lead to gaps in care, putting patients at risk and exposing agencies to regulatory non-compliance. It's important for home infusion nurses to stay current on the latest practices to provide the highest standard of care, particularly as the complexity of home infusion therapy increases.

Infusion Therapy Then and Now

Reflecting on my early days of providing home infusion care in the 1980s and developing programs with the infusion pharmacy, it's evident that we've come a long way.

Back then, peripherally inserted central catheters (PICCs) were not yet available and patients received infusions via peripheral catheters or non-tunneled and sutured subclavian catheters. There were no prefilled saline or heparin syringes, and patients were taught to work with needles to draw up such solutions.

Today, advancements in vascular access devices, securement devices to reduce the risk of catheter loss, infusion administration technology, and telehealth have contributed to safer care and an improved ability to monitor patients in the home setting.

The importance of comprehensive training



As the demand for home infusion grows, agencies are increasingly hiring nurses directly out of school or from settings where infusion therapy is less common. Without proper training, these nurses may lack the necessary skills to safely administer and teach patients complex infusion therapies, posing risks to patient outcomes, patient trust, and agency reputation. Insufficient training can lead to an increase in rehospitalizations, which carries significant financial implications under the Home Health Value-Based Purchasing (HHVBP) model.

According to the INS Standards, home care organizations that provide infusion therapy must implement a comprehensive program that includes clinician education, competency assessment, evidence-based policies and procedures, and a commitment to quality improvement. Agencies shouldn't accept patients for home infusion therapy without a well-established program in place that includes documented competencies related to infusion care.

One key INS Standard—Standard 5: Competency—emphasizes the importance of validating and assessing a clinician's competency before they provide patient care. This assessment should take place during the onboarding process and be maintained regularly through ongoing evaluations. Competency in performing [infusion therapy procedures](#), such as PICC site care and implanted port access, should be measured using a variety of techniques, including direct observation of the nurse in practice. By adhering to these standards, home care organizations can ensure that their clinicians are equipped to deliver high-quality infusion therapy and improve patient outcomes.

The U.S. home infusion therapy market is projected to grow from \$19.65B in 2025 to **\$38.02B** by 2032.¹



Real-world consequences of inadequate training

As an expert witness, I've reviewed several legal cases where home care nurses failed to recognize signs of infection or adverse reactions, leading to severe patient outcomes such as renal failure, hearing loss, and even death. These cases reflect the need for well-educated nurses who can provide comprehensive patient assessments and make informed decisions during treatment.

The most significant risk of insufficient infusion therapy training is patient harm. In addition, agencies face financial and legal risks. Rehospitalizations, extended care needs, and lawsuits can damage an agency's reputation and bottom line. Investing in high-quality training programs not only improves patient outcomes but also protects your agency from liability.

While most home care nurses are caring and competent, there are instances where some become overly task-oriented. Nurses might focus on completing the necessary treatments without recognizing important changes in a patient's condition or adequately educating the patient and family on proper infusion techniques and potential complications. While patient and caregiver education is important in all healthcare settings, effective patient education is essential to the safety of home infusion therapy.

Through the review of home care documentation and the depositions of nurses involved in these cases, a recurring issue is evident: a lack of knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with specific treatments. The competence of home healthcare nurses in evaluating and analyzing assessment details is critically important.

Key Risks of Insufficient Infusion Therapy Training and Preparation

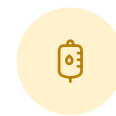
- Patient harm
- Rehospitalizations
- Extended care
- Financial and legal risks, including lawsuits

Common infusion therapy treatments: benefits and risks



Home infusion therapy encompasses a wide range of treatments, including:

- **IV antimicrobial administration, the largest category.** Many antimicrobial medications are well-suited for home use, allowing patients to continue their treatment outside of the hospital setting. Careful evaluation of the risks and benefits is necessary, but for both short- and long-term courses, home-based antibiotic therapy can effectively support patient recovery.
- **Hydration fluids** are also administered at home to manage mild to moderate dehydration, reducing the risk of emergency department visits or hospitalizations.
- **Biologic therapies** to treat chronic conditions are becoming more widely used, and some chemotherapy agents can also be administered at home. However, when transitioning biologics or chemotherapy agents to the home setting, careful consideration of home safety is crucial due to the risk of adverse reactions and the need to ensure that any such reactions are manageable at home.
- **Parenteral nutrition** is perhaps the most complex home infusion therapy, indicated for patients unable to adequately ingest oral nutrients.
- **Inotropic drug infusions**, such as dobutamine or milrinone, are used for patients awaiting cardiac transplantation or as palliative care to manage heart failure and reduce rehospitalizations due to exacerbations. Careful planning and patient education are essential when transitioning patients to home on parenteral nutrition and inotropic therapy.



27%

Antimicrobials make up 27% of the total home infusion therapy market.²

The Medbridge Home Infusion Therapy Certificate Program

Home care nurses must possess a high level of knowledge and skills to safely insert and manage vascular access devices, provide infusions via an array of infusion methods, recognize and respond to complications, and provide patient and caregiver education. To help bridge the knowledge gap in home infusion therapy, Medbridge offers a comprehensive [Home Infusion Therapy Certificate](#) that equips home health nurses with the knowledge and skills needed for safe infusion administration.

Key areas of focus in the certificate program include vascular access device care, infusion administration techniques, and medication safety practices. By gaining competency in these areas, nurses acquire the skills they need to confidently and safely provide home infusion care and educate patients and caregivers. Nurses also develop the critical thinking required to identify, prevent, and manage potential infusion-related complications in the home.

Medbridge also offers the following Infusion Therapy Procedural Skills.

- Infusion Therapy—Central Venous Access Devices (CVAD): Blood Sampling for Laboratory Studies
- Infusion Therapy: CVAD Site Care and Dressing Change, Flushing and Lock
- General Infusion Therapy Administration: IV Push, Gravity Drip, Elastomeric Pump, Electronic Infusion Pump
- Accessing an Implanted Vascular Access Port
- Discontinuing a Chemotherapy Infusion
- Infusion Therapy: Peripheral IV Catheter (PIVC) Insertion
- Parenteral Nutrition Administration
- Subcutaneous Fluid Administration
- Subcutaneous Medication Administration
- Phlebotomy
- Peripherally Inserted Catheter Removal

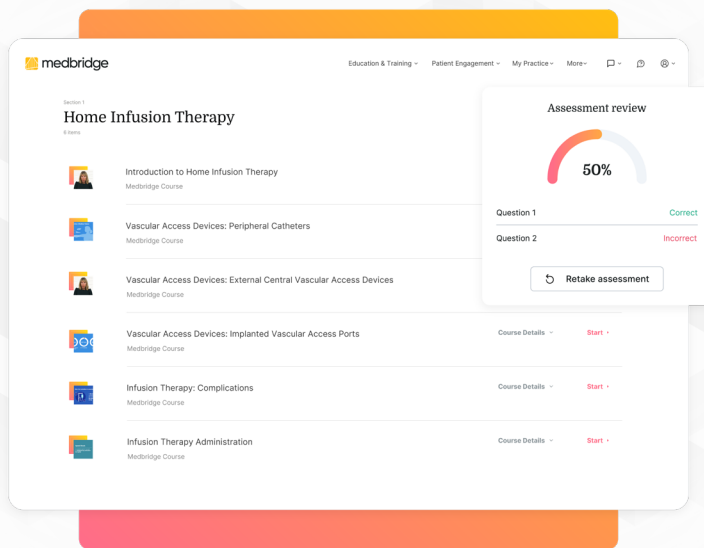
Medbridge also offers [Infusion Therapy Procedural Skills](#), which can be used in conjunction with the Certificate Program, giving nurses the opportunity to review the correct steps in performing procedures during onboarding, annual competencies, or at the point of care.



The value of proper infusion therapy training

Comprehensive education in home infusion therapy provides numerous benefits for both staff and organizations. Properly trained nurses experience greater job satisfaction and confidence in their ability to manage complex cases. This leads to improved patient outcomes, reduced rehospitalizations, and fewer adverse events.

From an organizational perspective, a well-trained staff ensures regulatory compliance, improves operational efficiency, and minimizes legal risks. By investing in ongoing education and competency assessments, agencies can not only enhance the quality of care but also drive long-term cost savings and operational success. With the right resources, such as the Medbridge Home Infusion Therapy Certificate, agencies can equip their staff with the knowledge and skills to thrive in this growing field.



References

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Lisa Gorski has worked for more than 40 years as a home care clinical nurse specialist (CNS) and educator. She began to specialize in home infusion therapy as she transitioned from being a critical care nurse to a home care nurse in the 1980s and was given the position to develop a home infusion program, including policies and procedures, nurse educational programs, competency assessment, and outcome monitoring tools. She learned how to insert peripherally inserted central catheters (PICCs) and the first generation of midline catheters, and trained nurses in various procedures. She maintained a caseload of patients, focusing especially on providing the more complex home infusions such as parenteral nutrition, inotropic infusions, and chemotherapy drugs.

Today, Lisa continues to provide home infusions of biologic drugs to patients. Lisa published the first book addressing home infusion therapy titled *High Tech Home Care* by Aspen Publishers in 1994 and has authored several additional books and more than 70 journal articles since that time, the most recent book being the 8th edition of the *Manual of IV Therapeutics: Evidence-based Practice for Infusion Therapy* (FA Davis Publishers) in 2023.

Lisa joined the Infusion Nurses Society in the 1980s, served as the Treasurer and then President for the local Wisconsin chapter, and then became involved in the national INS organization. She joined the Standards Committee in 2004, was inducted as a fellow into the American Academy of Nursing in 2006, became INS President for 2007–2008, chaired the committee for 2011, 2016, and 2021, and co-chaired for the 2024 Standards.

Lisa continues to speak nationally and internationally on standards development, infusion therapy/vascular access, and home health care. She has provided education about the INS Standards in multiple countries on almost every continent, from Asia to South America, Africa, and Europe. Lisa is currently the Editor in Chief of the professional home care journal *Home Healthcare Now*. With her commitment to and passion for home infusion therapy, she has added a column appearing in each issue entitled “Infusing Knowledge.”

About medbridge

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