

## Talking Points: Nurse Practitioners and the Future of Primary Care

Recently the AAFP released a document suggesting that nurse practitioners need to participate in patient care as members of teams under the supervision of physicians. It implied that nurse practitioners functioning autonomously and at the top of their license would lead to a two-tiered health care system that would expose patients to inferior care.

Listed below are recommended talking points for nurse practitioners to use when confronted with questions regarding the opinions expressed by the AAFP.

- Nurse practitioners are highly qualified health care providers who undergo rigorous educational preparation that enables them to diagnose and treat acute and chronic illness as well as provide preventive care to their patients. A significant magnitude of studies has demonstrated the high quality of nurse practitioner care.
- The patient is the focus and center of all nurse practitioner practice.
- Nurse practitioners support and participate in team approaches to patient care based on the following concepts:
  - Healthcare teams consist of patients and their health care providers.
  - The health care team does not belong to a single provider.
  - Healthcare teams are dynamic, with the needs of the patient directing who best can lead the team at any given point of time.
  - Flexible frameworks are required for innovation and creation of emerging models to provide high quality care.
- Current research on innovative nurse practitioner-led models of care demonstrates the success of nurse practitioners as team leaders for primary care.
- Studies have demonstrated that nurse practitioners are adequately educated/prepared to provide safe, high quality primary care to their patients. All nurse practitioner educational programs are at the graduate level (masters, post-masters, or doctoral degree). Programs of study are based on strong scientific foundations including evidenced-based practice and the management of complex health systems. These programs of study clinically build upon the bachelor's program in nursing. Population focus is determined at the time of entry into the graduate program (e.g. family, adult/gerontology, pediatrics, women's health).
- Care coordination is a hallmark of nurse practitioner care. Coordinated care delivery comes in many forms: nurse practitioner-led teams are one of the available and successful delivery models for team based care.
- Nurse practitioner practices meet the criteria for the primary care medical home: patient centered, comprehensive, coordinated, accessible high quality and safe care.
- Nurse practitioners can make significant contributions to reducing the primary care shortage if they are able to practice to the full extent of their educational preparation.