



# Scope of Practice Kit: What Do Patients Say?

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The United States is adopting a new model of primary care built around patients, and their perspectives on health care providers offer valuable insight into increasing the quality and affordability of care.

- Patients highly value the additional education and training that physicians receive. According to two consecutive surveys, **90% of patient respondents stated that a physician's additional years of medical education and training are vital to optimal patient care**, especially in the event of a complication or medical emergency.
- **Quality** and **safety** are top concerns for patients. **Three out of 4** patients stated that **they prefer to be treated by a physician** even if it takes longer to get an appointment and even if it costs more.
- Confusion about health care provider qualifications abounds among patients. In a 2010 patient survey:
  - 26% of patients thought that nurse practitioners were medical doctors
  - 35% of respondents thought that a doctor of nursing practice (DNP) was a physician.
  - 90% of respondents stated that they would support legislation to require all health care providers to clearly designate their level of education, skills, and training in their offices and promotional materials.
- The physician-patient relationship remains central to the whole person health care experience. A Colorado study found that:
  - 68% of patients felt that family physicians were most likely to understand their entire health background, while only 11% felt the same about nurse practitioners.
  - 72% of patients indicated that physicians were their most trusted source for health care information; 6% of patients identified nurse practitioners as their most trusted source.
- Effective chronic disease management is a top priority for patients. In patient surveys from 2008 and 2010:
  - 86% of respondents indicated that patients with one or more chronic diseases benefitted when a physician leads the primary health care team.
  - 83% of patients indicated that they preferred a physician to have primary responsibility for the diagnosis and management of their health care.
- Patients are concerned about prescription drugs. According to a series of patient surveys:
  - 78% of patients stated that only medical doctors should treat chronic pain by prescribing prescription drugs or other substances that have a high potential for addiction or abuse.
  - 77% of patients stated that only medical doctors should write prescriptions for medication to treat mental health conditions.
- Patients want access to the highest quality care at an affordable price. Solutions to the primary care shortage must consider patient perspectives and the high value they place on physician-led care.