



Scope of Practice Kit: The Issue & The Solution

Government Relations Division • 1133 Connecticut Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20036

What are the issues?

- There is a shortage of primary care physicians throughout much of the country
 - To rectify this, legislatures & interest groups are pushing for independent practice for nurse practitioners
 - Problem – primary care physicians and nurse practitioners *do not* share the same levels of expertise, training, or knowledge.
 - Problem – health professionals’ training has a direct impact on the depth and quality of patient care.
 - Problem - this expands nurse practitioner practices *beyond* their training and appropriate scope.
 - Problem - this establishes a two-tiered health care system.
 - Problem - this is a public health / public safety concern.

What are the Solutions?

- Family physicians complete more than 20,000 hours in medical training, while nurse practitioners complete 2,800 to 5,350 hours of nursing training.
 - Family physicians complete and experience at least *four times* more clinical training.
 - Family physicians have the knowledge and training to order and interpret tests within the context of the patient’s overall health condition.
 - Family physicians assess patients presenting with undifferentiated symptoms and signs, and make a diagnosis that can range from very simple to very complex.
 - Family physicians can develop and implement medical treatment plans that address multiple organ systems and that integrate medication.
- A physician-led team based approach – The Patient Centered Medical Home
 - This model ensures that patients have access to the expertise of all health professionals.
 - Only through this model will patients be ensured the best care from the appropriate health care professional at the proper time.
- Training more primary care physicians will increase access and strengthen primary care.
 - Students and residents need stronger incentives to choose the primary care specialty.
 - Scholarships & loan forgiveness programs are critical for primary care physicians.
- Patients and physicians benefit from appropriately trained nurse practitioners and physician assistants.
 - These health care providers are part of the solution, but are NOT a substitute for doctors.
 - Nurse practitioners can develop and implement a nursing care plan that is built on the medical treatment plan written by a doctor.