

Nurse Practitioners – Stretching the Michigan Health Care Dollar

Who Are Nurse Practitioners?

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are registered nurses who have advanced education (at the master's and doctorate levels) and advanced clinical training beyond their initial registered nurse preparation. They use evidenced based treatments and consult and collaborate with other healthcare professionals to provide quality comprehensive care. Currently, Michigan has over 6,500 licensed and certified nurse practitioners.

How Do Nurse Practitioners Provide More for Your Health Care Dollar?

Literally hundreds of studies over 40 years have consistently found NP care to be high quality, comparable and in some cases exceeding outcomes of physician care, with very high patient satisfaction (e.g. OTA, 1985; Brown & Grimes, 1985; Lenz & Munding, 2002; Munding & Kane, 2000, Laurant, et al, 2005; Spitzer, 1997; Horrocks, 2002). NP care is also cost efficient. In a recent policy brief from Rand Health (2009), they addressed the rising cost of health care in Massachusetts after their near universal health plan. Rand made multiple recommendations including encouraging policies that would promote NP practicing to their fullest preparation without unnecessary regulations and changing payment policies for NPs. They went on to say that NPs are underutilized despite being qualified to provide primary care at a lower cost than other providers. A list of additional articles and research on the quality and cost effectiveness of nurse practitioner services is available upon request.

What Type of Services Do Nurse Practitioners Provide?

Nurse practitioners provide healthcare services in a variety of settings and are qualified to meet the majority of patients' health care needs. NP's evaluate and treat a multitude of acute and chronic health problems, focusing on teaching patients self care techniques to improve their quality of life and reduce health care dollars spent by decreasing recurrence and exacerbation of their illnesses.

The following is a list of examples of the services NPs provide:

- Comprehensive health histories and physical exams
- Diagnosis and treatment of acute problems such as infections and injuries
- Diagnosis, treatment and management of chronic problems such as asthma or diabetes
- Routine care such as prenatal, well child care, preventive adult care.
- Order and interpret lab tests, x-rays and other diagnostic studies.
- Preventive health guidance and counseling
- Referral to specialists for additional services as needed

Where Do Nurse Practitioners Practice?

Nurse Practitioners practice in variety of primary care and specialty areas including but not limited to: Health maintenance organizations (HMO), NP managed and community health centers, rural health clinics, urgent and retail care clinics, correctional facilities, private nursing offices, hospitals and specialty physician offices. Nationwide, 66% of NPs practice in primary care with 20% in a rural setting. In Michigan, that number is lower due to a more restrictive regulatory environment.

References on Cost, Safety, Quality and Regulation

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The Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners is available as a consultant on healthcare issues, to provide expert testimony, and to support legislation or regulatory initiatives that improves the health care system for Michigan citizens.