

## ***Nurse Practitioners in Your Community***

With advanced nursing degrees and extra training and experience, nurse practitioners are helping Canadians get more access to quality health care. In community clinics, health-care centres, doctors' offices, nursing homes and emergency departments, nurse practitioners diagnose and manage illnesses like diabetes, order and interpret tests, write prescriptions and a whole lot more.

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have additional education and nursing experience. They are health-care professionals who treat the whole person: addressing needs relating to their physical and mental health, gathering their medical history, focusing on how their illness affects their lives and their family, and offering ways for people to lead a healthy life and teaching them how to manage chronic illness. Nurse practitioners are educators and researchers who can be consulted by other health-care team members.

### **Nurse practitioners can:**

- diagnose and treat illnesses
- sutures and other minor procedures
- order tests
- prescribe medications
- refer to physicians, specialists, and other team members

### **Where do nurse practitioners work?**

You will find nurse practitioners in a variety of health-care settings, such as:

- community care (community clinics, health-care centres, doctors' offices, and in patients' homes providing a wide range of services, including end-of-life care)
- long-term care (nursing homes)
- hospitals (outpatient clinics, emergency rooms and other patient areas)
- nurse practitioner-led clinics

### **What kind of health-care services do nurse practitioners provide?**

Nurse practitioners provide direct care to people of all ages, families, groups and communities. They treat illnesses, order tests and prescribe medications. In addition, they teach individuals and their families about healthy living, preventing diseases and managing illnesses. In essence, nurse practitioners bring together the medical knowledge needed to diagnose and treat illnesses with the values and skills of nursing. Nurse practitioners are leaders, consultants and researchers, incorporating new knowledge into their practice. Nurse practitioners play a key role in community/organizational development and capacity-building, as well as health policy development.

## **Do nurse practitioners replace other health-care professionals? Will I still be able to see my doctor?**

Nurse practitioners work together with — rather than replace — other health-care providers. They are part of a team and collaborate with registered nurses, doctors, social workers and others to provide care. You will still be able to see your family doctor and other health-care providers.

## **What are the benefits of nurse practitioners?**

Nurse practitioners bring value to Canadians and their health-care system. Studies about the benefits of nurse practitioners and about patients' experiences tell us that nurse practitioners:

- involve patients in decisions related to their care
- improve access to primary health care
- reduce pressures on the health-care system
- are valued and trusted by patients
- provide high-quality management of chronic illness (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure)

## **Are nurse practitioners a new addition to the health-care system?**

Nurse practitioners first appeared in Canada in the 1960s. The early nurse practitioners provided care in rural and remote areas. By the 1970s, interest in the nurse practitioner role increased and more education programs for the role were started. Today, nurse practitioners are seen as an important part of the health-care system.

## **CNA's Nurse Practitioner Position Statement**

CNA believes that the nurse practitioner role contributes significantly to improve timely access to individualized, high-quality, cost-effective care through a broad range of models of health care.

**The nurse practitioner role incorporates the advanced knowledge and preparation needed to diagnose and treat illnesses with the values and skills of nursing. Nurse practitioners focus on health promotion and treating the whole patient physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.**

