

## **Have you been evaluated or treated by a Nurse Practitioner instead of a physician? Who are these Nurse Practitioners?**

Nurse practitioners (NP's) are registered nurses with advanced training in the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. NP's provide high quality health care services and are able to diagnose and treat a broad variety of health conditions. They provide some of the same services as physicians and may work independently or collaboratively with physician colleagues. Along with providing high quality clinical care, NP's have distinguished themselves by emphasizing disease prevention, wellness, health education, and counseling.

## **How are Nurse Practitioners educated and licensed?**

NP's preparation requires a graduate level education and advanced clinical training, with many NP's possessing doctorate degrees. Traditionally NP's choose a specialty which may include pediatrics, acute care, adult health, family health, midwife, mental health, neonatology, gerontology, women's health, and nurse anesthetists.

Most NP's are nationally board certified in their specialty area and licensed by the state in which they practice. There is mandatory continuing education required to maintain certification and licensure. All states including the District of Columbia recognize NP's as expert health care providers.

## **What services do Nurse Practitioners provide?**

NP's provide a full range of clinical services. They are equipped to diagnosis and treat acute and chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections, and injuries. They may prescribe medications, order and interpret diagnostic tests, round in hospitals, perform some surgical procedures, and manage a patients' overall care. NP's are uniquely equipped to assist individuals in making wise lifestyle choices which promote health, wellness, and disease prevention. NP's provide patient centered care with an emphasis on preventative medicine.

## **What role will Nurse Practitioners play in healthcare reform?**

The number of individuals seeking health care is estimated to rise dramatically over the next several years. A growing and aging population, medical advances which lead to living longer, and the possibility of universal healthcare may all play a part in this growth. Along with more patients in need of health care, the Association of American Medical Colleges has projected a physician shortage of approximately 100,000 by the year 2020.

NP's are uniquely equipped to help fill this need and expand access to top notch health care providers. They have consistently demonstrated that their patient centered prevention focused health care reduces emergency room visits, lowers medication costs, and reduces hospital stays (American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, 2010). The net result is successful cost effective health care.

As a local example, Terry Gueldner MD and Leanna Beaumont NP, have developed a unique practice style, at The Wisconsin Vein Center, that merges the distinctive strengths of both MD and NP. This

collaborative approach facilitates scheduling flexibility for patients, expands the services provided, and enhances overall patient care and satisfaction. NP's have the unique ability to focus their professional services in a variety of specialties and settings. They will become much more visible in both private practice and hospital settings, partnering with physicians to deliver first class health care.

Leanna L. Beaumont MSN, APNP is a board certified nurse practitioner with cardiology and vascular training. She now works with Dr. Terry Gueldner at The Wisconsin Vein Center.