

On behalf of the 135,000 Nurse Practitioners (NPs) practicing in the country today, we are responding to the segment that aired December 9 on your network and to the article by the Fox News Medical Contributor Dr. Marc Siegel in Forbes.com. In both his article and his appearance, Dr. Siegel made many erroneous statements about NPs, leaving the reader or viewer with a distorted picture of the high-quality healthcare services provided by NPs. In the spirit of fair and balanced reporting, we are asking you to provide your viewers with accurate, factual information.

While there is no doubt that there is a shortage of primary care providers in the country today – NPs provide 135,000 solutions to that shortage. As primary care providers, NPs are proven expert patient-centered clinicians and the healthcare provider of choice for many people because of their unique combination of medical and nursing expertise and skills. NPs provide high-quality, cost-effective, comprehensive and personalized healthcare to patients of all ages and across all segments of the population.

NPs have been providing primary care in the United States since 1965 and practice autonomously and in collaboration with other healthcare providers. The autonomous nature of the NP's advanced clinical practice requires accountability for healthcare outcomes. Clearly, increased utilization of this healthcare professional would lead to better access, improved outcomes and overall lower health care costs.

Among their many services, NPs:

- Diagnose and treat acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections and injuries
- Order, perform, interpret and supervise diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays
- Prescribe medications and other treatments
- Partner with their patients to focus on health promotion and disease prevention
- Provide health education and counseling, thus guiding patients to make smarter health and lifestyle choices, which ultimately may lead to reduced healthcare costs

Currently, Master's degrees are the minimum entry level degree for NPs. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has issued a recommendation that all NP programs be converted from Master's degrees to Doctoral degrees by 2015, a process that is currently underway. It is important to note that the course work currently required in NP Master's programs is equivalent to that of other professional clinical doctoral programs. Many NPs have been in clinical practice as an RN for 8 – 10 years before returning to earn a Master's and in some cases, a doctoral degree, thus bringing a significant amount of expertise to patients, given the scope of the course work and clinical practice prior to coming to the NP role.

In 2008, approximately 8,000 NPs graduated from NP educational programs. With proper funding this number could be increased substantially to assist in meeting the primary care needs of the public. Better awareness of the value of NPs and increased access to their valuable services will go a long way in solving the primary care provider shortage. The high level of satisfaction and confidence that patients have in NPs is evidenced by the approximate 600 million visit that are made to NPs each year.

For 45 years, research has established that NPs provide high-quality, cost-effective, comprehensive, patient-centered, personalized primary care for persons of all ages with excellent outcomes. According to the February 2008, *U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report: "Primary Care Professionals: Recent Supply, Trends, Projections and Valuation of Service,"* NPs are the fastest growing discipline of primary care providers in the United States. In fact the number of primary care NPs is increasing at a rate of 9.44% per capita, compared to 1.17% per capita for physicians.

As the oldest and largest national professional membership organization for NPs of all specialties, the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) has extensive and comprehensive research data on NPs and their practice and would welcome the opportunity to work with you as a resource to provide your

viewers with clear and concise information about the many healthcare services provided by this group of expert clinicians. NPs have a compelling story to tell and the American public deserves to have all the necessary information needed to make intelligent choices when selecting their healthcare provider.

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