

## **Nurse Practitioners Play Critical Role in Health Care**

To the Editor:

Re: "Nurses' Role in the Future of Health Care" (column, Nov. 18):

The Institute of Medicine, and Dr. Pauline Chen in her column, clearly recognize the critical role nurses must play in our health care system. However, all nurses are not created equal.

For nearly half a century, Nurse Practitioners (NPs) have been performing many of the same functions as physicians including prescribing medication and performing physical exams, and have become the health care provider of choice for millions of Americans.

NPs have a proven track record of success and research shows that they provide high quality primary care with outcomes that are similar to, or even better than, primary care physicians. In fact, of more than 100 published reports on the quality of care provided by both NPs and physicians, not a single study has found that NPs provide inferior services.

Currently 140,000 strong, we must encourage our health care system to fully embrace this highly skilled, educated and qualified health care resource. The nation's health depends on it.

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Austin, Texas, Nov. 19, 2010