

Response to Parija B. Kavilanz, CNNMoney.com senior writer

On behalf of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), we read with interest your July 23 CNNMoney.com article "Health care's future may already exist." The article notes "In medical homes, the family physician is like a personal health coach, responsible for managing all aspects of the patient's health care needs" and "The doctor also leads a team of coaches -- including nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists and other medical professionals - with the aim of providing a more "holistic" approach to health care." We respectfully wish to correct the impression that a primary care physician must head the team. Medical home practices may also be led by other primary care providers such as nurse practitioners (NPs).

It may also be of interest to note that NPs have been providing the "holistic" approach to health care for nearly 45 years - and are the health care providers of choice for many people because of their unique combination of medical and nursing expertise and skills. In addition to clinical services such as ordering, performing and interpreting diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays, diagnosing and treating acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections and injuries and prescribing medications and other treatments, NPs focus on health promotion, disease prevention, and health education and counseling, guiding patients to make smarter health and lifestyle choices. This type of patient-centered care is the model of care that NPs have provided since the inception of the NP role.

NPs are licensed independent practitioners who practice in ambulatory, acute and long-term care settings as primary care providers. They practice autonomously and in collaboration with other health care providers. Increased utilization of these primary care professionals would lead to more access, improved outcomes and overall lower health care costs. It is in the best interest of consumers that they receive all the facts available about health care professionals so that they can make intelligent and informed decisions when selecting the provider of their care.

NPs are well established as high quality primary care providers. There are over 125,000 of these clinicians practicing in the United States, the majority of whom are practicing in primary care. Approximately 6000 NPs graduate from their educational programs each year. 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.

AANP, the oldest, largest and only full-service national professional membership organization for NPs of all specialties represents the interests of 125,000 NPs in the U. S. Created in 1985 to provide NPs with a unified way to network and to advocate for NP issues across all specialties at the local, state, and national levels, AANP has continually served as a major resource for NPs, their patients and other healthcare consumers, to promote excellence in practice, education and research; to provide legislative leadership to advance health policy; to establish healthcare standards and to advocate for access to high-quality, cost-effective, comprehensive, patient-centered healthcare.

We appreciate having the opportunity to respond to your article and hope that you will assist in disseminating this information to the public as well. AANP has extensive and comprehensive research data regarding NPs and their practice and we would welcome the opportunity to work with you as a resource in the future.

Sincerely,

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Tim Knettler, MBA, Chief Executive Officer

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