

## Response to CNNMoney.com

We read with interest the July 18 posting in CNNMoney.com by Parja B. Kavilanz titled "Family doctors: An endangered breed." Although the care provided by nurse practitioners (NPs) is not mentioned anywhere in the article, we were delighted to see that you did ask for comment about NPs as primary care providers.

In addition to the 125,000 NPs currently practicing in the U. S., there are approximately 6,000 NPs graduating from educational programs each year. (NPs have graduate, advanced education, most have master's degrees and many have doctorates - and advanced clinical training beyond their initial registered nurse preparation.) With proper funding this number could be increased substantially to assist in meeting the primary care needs of the public.

The question: "Should specialists, nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants be encouraged to fill in the gap left by shortage of primary care doctors?" is a bit disingenuous as NPs are not "encouraged to fill the gap" - they ARE primary care providers and in many instances, the only healthcare provider in some communities around the country. There is no doubt that there is a shortage of primary care providers in the country today - and NPs provide 125,000 solutions to that shortage. (click [here](#) July 20 *Roll Call* message)  
<http://www.aanp.org/NR/rdonlyres/4910757C-8FC9-434F-B350-D4DBB119B7D1/0/RollCall.pdf>

While NPs are the providers of choice for many people, 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. What sets this exceptional group of healthcare professionals apart from others is that they bring a unique perspective to health services by emphasizing both care and cure. 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.

Among their many services, NPs:

- Order, perform and interpret diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays
- Diagnose and treat acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections and injuries
- Prescribe medications and other treatments
- Partner with their patients, spending time treating the whole person, guiding their patients to make smart health and lifestyle choices

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.

NPs 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.

The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), the oldest and largest national professional membership organization for NPs of all specialties, was 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. Since its inception, 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 and personalized 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,

Dee Swanson, MSN, NP-C, FAANP, President  
Tim Knettlar, MBA, Chief Executive Officer  
Jan Towers, PhD, NP-C, CRNP, FAANP, FAAN, Director of Health Policy