

October 21, 2011

Association of Registered Nurses of British Columbia
British Columbia Nurse Practitioners Association

Educating British Columbians About Nurse Practitioners

VANCOUVER—The Association of Registered Nurses of BC (ARNBC) and the BC Nurse Practitioners Association (BCNPA), in partnership with the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) is today launching a campaign to educate British Columbians on the important role of Nurse Practitioners within the healthcare system.

It is clear that role clarity, better communication and additional education is needed about nurse practitioners in light of an October 19, 2012 article entitled, "More BCMA alarm bells over liability, process with NP admit/discharge scope: Who's responsible if NP discharges a physician's patient and there's an adverse consequence?" which appeared in *The Medical Post*. Written by David Godkin, the article focusses on the reaction of BCMA President, Dr. Shelley Ross, to the recent decision by the B.C. Government to allow Nurse Practitioners (NPs) to admit and discharge patients from hospital.

BCNPA President, Rosemary Graham, was "astounded" by Dr. Ross' comments, stating, "To date, other than to request my address, the BCNPA has no record of BCMA contacting our Association through any means, nor have we had a conversation about how NPs can create improved access to healthcare in B.C."

According to the article, Dr. Ross recognizes that Nurse Practitioners act as teachers and help chronic-care patients manage their conditions, but still believes that these activities should occur under the direction of a physician. She underscores that physicians don't want NPs working side-by-side as a general practitioner.

"It is critical that the general public, physicians and government are informed by research and current experience," said Graham, in a comment earlier today. "Collaborative practice has a role in Canadian healthcare and it is vital that this model is not hindered by lack of knowledge or unfounded fears."

With reference to the concerns physicians may have around liability in the event a patient experiences a negative outcome after being admitted or discharged by an NP, Graham explained NPs are autonomous care providers whose scope is supported by legislation and are accountable for their own work.

"Recent legislative changes are examples of supports that ensure NPs remain accountable for the care they provide individually and for their role in a team's health care outcomes. We would welcome involvement in any consultation that impacts NP practice in B.C."

Current evidence demonstrates that NPs contribute to better care for individuals, better health for populations and lower healthcare costs. The Association of Registered Nurses of BC (ARNBC) and the BCNPA hope the BCMA will review the facts, study B.C.'s well considered legislation relative to NP practice, and acknowledge the overwhelming evidence that supports greater utilization of Nurse Practitioners as one key method of improving access to much needed healthcare services.

Nurse Practitioners have the advanced knowledge and nursing experience to deliver and coordinate high-quality care, order tests, prescribe medications, and diagnose and manage chronic illnesses, and contribute as a member of the interprofessional health care team. The government of B.C. has consistently invested in excellent educational preparation and regulation of Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, and the public can be assured that they practice with the highest of professional standards.

“We know that British Columbians who have had the opportunity to receive care from Nurse Practitioners understand the valuable resource they represent for patients and for the healthcare team,” said Susan Duncan, ARNBC President. “We know that many family doctors and specialist physicians around the province are champions for the valuable role that the integration of Nurse Practitioners is playing in improving access to timely and appropriate care around this province.”

Today the Canadian Nurses Association, the Association of Registered Nurses of BC and the BCNPA have joined forces to launch a campaign to educate the public, physicians and indeed our own government about the role that NPs can play in BC healthcare. The campaign entitled, *Nurse Practitioners: It's About Time*, has met with great success in numerous other Canadian jurisdictions. More information can be found at www.npnow.ca. The BCNPA and ARNBC look forward to ongoing dialogue with the BCMA, government and the public around the role Nurse Practitioners play in healthcare.

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