

Health-care providers jointly call on private insurers to eliminate barriers for nurse practitioners

It's time insurance companies recognize NPs in their private insurance policies as prescribers of medical supplies and devices and other health-care services



Ottawa, November 13, 2019 — Today, health-care leaders from across Canada come together to join the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada (NPAC) to call for all health insurance companies who provide private health insurance in Canada to amend their policies and language to reflect the scope of practice of nurse practitioners (NPs).

NPs in Canada have a regulated advanced scope of practice as a result of their additional education and skills. This permits them to autonomously assess, diagnose and treat medical issues. It also includes the legislated authority to order diagnostic tests, write prescriptions for medically necessary devices, and refer clients to other health-care services.

“Most Canadian private insurance plans reimburse their clients only for physician-issued prescriptions for medically necessary devices, supplies and treatments performed by other health professionals. NPs are not included in most Canadian private insurance plans’ definitions of prescribers, even though these activities are well within an NP’s legal scope of practice,” said Claire Betker, president of CNA.

In 2018, there were 5,697 NPs practicing across Canada in all provinces and territories. NPs work in a variety of different settings, including hospitals, community care, long-term care, and NP-led clinics. NPs in primary care serve nearly three million Canadians.

“NPs help to improve access to care, particularly in rural and remote communities. Today, some of these communities have inadequate access or no access to a physician. NPs are at the forefront of developing innovative health solutions, especially in rural communities,” said Lenora Brace, president of NPAC.

There is a significant primary care deficit in Canada. Refusing prescriptions written by NPs for medical supplies and devices and for health-care services for patients leads to delays in timely treatment and care. Insurance plan members with an NP as their primary care provider should not be subject to reduced access to health insurance coverage.

“Given that NPs can solve Canada’s primary care shortage, especially in underserved areas, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) echoes the call to modernize insurance policies and break down barriers to NP care. As revealed by the largest-ever pan-Canadian survey of NPs, which was conducted by CFNU in 2018, removing barriers to their full scope of practice was one of the top concerns affecting the retention and recruitment of this underutilized group of practitioners,” said Linda Silas, president of CFNU.

CNA and NPAC ask that insurance companies recognize NPs in their private insurance policies as prescribers of medical supplies and devices and other health-care services. Doing so will ensure that insurance companies adapt to the changing landscape of health practice and remain relevant.

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About the Canadian Nurses Association

The Canadian Nurses Association is the national and global professional voice of Canadian nursing, representing 135,000 nurses in all 13 jurisdictions across Canada. CNA advances the practice and profession of nursing to improve health outcomes and strengthen Canada’s publicly funded, not-for-profit health system.

About the Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada

The Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada is the national voice for nurse practitioners, with members in all provinces and territories across Canada.

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