



Nurse Practitioners
Association of Canada

Association des
infirmières et
infirmiers praticiens
du Canada

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NPAC Supports the Use of the Title "Doctor" by Nurse Practitioners

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The Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada (NPAC) announces its support for Nurse Practitioners (NPs) who have earned doctoral degrees, such as Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) or PhD, to use the title "Doctor" in clinical practice. This endorsement underscores NPAC's commitment to recognizing NPs' academic accomplishments and expertise in healthcare.

"While some regulatory bodies restrict the use of the title 'Doctor' to medical doctors, NPAC believes it is crucial to recognize the advanced academic achievements of NPs with doctoral degrees," said Dr. Laura Housden, NPAC President. "These NPs have dedicated themselves to enhancing their knowledge and skills in nursing and healthcare, and they should be able to use the 'Doctor' title to reflect their professional attainment."

In alignment with its advocacy, NPAC calls upon provincial and territorial regulators to modernize their policies to support NPs in using these titles, thereby reflecting contemporary healthcare practices and recognizing diverse professional doctorates beyond traditional PhDs. The use of the title "Doctor" by NPs with doctoral degrees acknowledges their academic excellence and emphasizes the advanced level of care they provide. NPAC emphasizes the importance of transparency in professional interactions, where NPs are encouraged to identify themselves as Nurse Practitioners alongside their use of the title "Doctor."

The history of the use of the term "Doctor" was initially bestowed to academics. It has never been a title that has only been held by medical doctors. As outlined in the article by Collier, the "PhD is the highest graduate degree awarded by universities....[physician] health professionals receive undergraduate degrees in medicine. It is a professional degree and not really a doctorate" (2016).



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It is crucial for NPs who use the title "Doctor" to identify themselves as Nurse Practitioners in all professional interactions. Transparency is essential to maintain patients' trust and avoid any potential confusion regarding the nurse practitioner's role and regulation. Therefore, while using the title "Doctor," NPs should always include their designation as Nurse Practitioners both in written and verbal communication (e.g., Dr. John Smith, NP or "I am Dr. John Smith, Nurse Practitioner").

In summary, the NP Association of Canada:

1. Supports the use of the title "Doctor" by NPs who have earned doctoral degrees.
2. Encourages provincial and territorial regulators to modernize the language to support NPs in the use of these titles.
3. Emphasizes the importance of NPs clearly identifying themselves as Nurse Practitioners in all professional settings.
4. Encourages and supports ongoing education and professional development among nurses and NPs to further enhance patient care quality.

References:

Collier, R. (2016). Who is entitled to the title of "doctor"? CMAJ, 188(13), E305

About NPAC

The Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada (NPAC) is the national voice of Nurse Practitioners, representing NPs in every province and territory. NPAC advocates for evidence-based policy, education, and practice environments that enable NPs to deliver accessible, high-quality care to all Canadians.

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