



Nurse Practitioners
Association of Canada

Association des
infirmières et
infirmiers praticiens
du Canada

NPAC-AIIPC
1205-1033 Marinaside Crescent
Vancouver, BC
V6Z 3A3

Position Statement

Use of the Title "Doctor" by Nurse Practitioners

The Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada (NPAC) supports and recognizes the significant academic achievements of Nurse Practitioners (NPs) who have earned doctoral degrees, such as Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) or PhD. These advanced degrees reflect a high level of expertise and dedication to the field of nursing and healthcare.

The NPAC acknowledges that some regulators restrict the use of the title Dr. by Nurse Practitioners, reserving this only in the clinical setting for physicians. However, the NPAC asserts that this title should be used by Nurse Practitioners who have achieved this level of academic excellence. We further assert that NPs who have earned the title of "Doctor" should be supported in using this title within their clinical practice. The use of the title "Doctor" acknowledges their academic accomplishments. It also serves to highlight the advanced knowledge that these NPs bring to patient care and healthcare delivery.

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).

We also acknowledge that it is crucial for NPs who use the title "Doctor" to clearly identify themselves as Nurse Practitioners in all professional interactions. Transparency is essential to maintain the trust of patients and to avoid any potential confusion regarding nurse practitioner 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").



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In summary, the Nurse Practitioners 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 the quality of care provided to patients.

References:

Collier, R. (2016). Who is entitled to the title of "doctor"? CMAJ, 188(13), E305.
<https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.109-5303>

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.

Approved by the Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada Board of Directors: June 2024