



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

Nurse Practitioners as Medical Directors

The Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada (NPAC) affirms that Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are well-positioned to serve as medical directors and health system leaders across Canada. With advanced clinical expertise, systems-level thinking, and a deep commitment to collaborative care, NPs are leading in roles that span clinical operations, strategic planning, quality improvement, informatics, and health system transformation.

Background

Medical leadership refers not to a specific profession, but to the capacity to lead teams and systems to improve patient outcomes, support interprofessional collaboration, and drive health innovation. In Canada, the title “medical director” is not a protected or regulated designation under legislation. Therefore, the leadership expectations and scope of responsibility inherent in such roles may be met by qualified health professionals, including Nurse Practitioners, with the requisite clinical and administrative expertise.

Nurse Practitioners are licensed, autonomous clinicians with graduate education, advanced diagnostic and therapeutic skills, and broad exposure to systems-based practice. In many jurisdictions, NPs are already leading interprofessional teams, serving in health authority governance, directing clinical programs, and contributing to policy development and system redesign. Their scope of practice and education align with the competencies required for executive leadership and strategic oversight.



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Rationale for Inclusion in Medical Leadership

- NPs lead across diverse domains: acute and primary care, mental health and addictions, long-term care, Indigenous health, and specialized services.
- NPs are embedded in leadership roles in clinical education, quality improvement, health informatics, research, and organizational governance.
- Leadership competency is embedded in NP education and reinforced through clinical and administrative experience.
- The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and other national bodies emphasize team-based, collaborative leadership models for modern healthcare systems.

Call to Action

The Nurse Practitioners Association of Canada strongly advocates for the recognition and integration of NPs in medical leadership positions, including as medical directors. We call upon health organizations, ministries, and governing bodies to:

- Ensure hiring policies and leadership development frameworks are inclusive of NPs.
- Recognize NPs as eligible for clinical and operational leadership roles.
- Actively support NP participation in governance, decision-making, and strategic planning at all levels of the health system.

Conclusion

Leadership in today's healthcare environment requires clinical insight, operational skill, and system-level thinking, all core attributes of NPs. The time for full recognition of NPs as clinical and operational leaders, including in the role of medical director, is now.



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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: August 2025