

Alternate Relationship Plan for Nurse Practitioners

Issue

Alberta's current funding mechanisms do not effectively support Nurse Practitioners to alleviate current or future demand on primary health care.

Background

- Nurse Practitioners (NP) are Registered Nurses (RN) with advanced education (master's degree).
- NPs are legislated under the Health Professions Act (HPA) and licenced and regulated to practice by the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA).
- The NP scope of practice is broader than RNs, and allows them to:
 - Conduct comprehensive health assessments
 - Treat and manage chronic illness
 - Order and interpret diagnostic tests
 - Prescribe some forms of medications
- NPs are not physician substitutes; they work in collaboration and consultation with physicians, nurses, and other health professionals
- Alberta has a growing need for primary health care providers, and NPs are a clear solution with a track record of providing patient centered quality health care for over four decades.
- NPs could play an important role in alleviating pressures on Alberta's health-care system if Alberta had appropriate funding models in place to enable NPs to practice within a collaborative primary care team.
 - An appropriate funding model(s) would not only increase access to primary care across the province, but also integrate NPs as collegial health care team members.
- The development of a NP Alternate Relationship Plan (ARP) in the primary care setting is an important first step towards improving Alberta's health care system that would get the right care, to the right people, at the right value.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends the Government of Alberta:

1. Develop an Alternate Relationship Plan (ARP) for physicians and Nurse Practitioners that would provide direct funding for both.
2. Reallocate funds from existing budgets for Alberta Health and Physicians Services to ensure nurse practitioner role integration and utilization in areas of need and/or for populations of need