

Private insurers can eliminate barriers for nurse practitioners

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada (NPAC) are calling on all health insurance companies who provide private health insurance plans in Canada to **amend their policies and language to reflect the scope of practice of nurse practitioners (NPs)**. NPs have the competencies to write prescriptions for medical supplies and devices (e.g., ostomy supplies and orthopedic support devices) as well as for other health-care services (e.g., physiotherapy, massage therapy).

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 the Canadian private insurance plans' definitions of prescribers, even though these activities are well within an NP's legal scope of practice.¹

Health care provided by NPs

Significant resources have been invested in developing the NP role and integrating it in the Canadian health-care system. In 2018, there were 5,697 NPs practising across Canada in all provinces and territories.² 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, with each NP having approximately 800 patients.³



Medical and ostomy supplies



Orthopedic devices



Physiotherapy



Massage therapy



Compression stockings



Mobility aids

There is a significant primary care deficit in Canada, with only 45% of Canadians reporting the ability to see a primary care physician on the same day or day after an urgent appointment is required.⁴ NPs provide comprehensive primary care and reduce the burden on the already clogged health-care system. Provincial governments continue to invest in NP care to increase access for the many Canadians who don't have a primary care provider.

NPs help to improve access to care, particularly in rural and remote communities.⁵ 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 for rural communities.

Benefits to clients, insurance companies

Insurance plan members with an NP as their primary care provider should not be subject to reduced access to health insurance coverage. 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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¹ College of Nurses of Ontario. (2019). *Practice standard: Nurse practitioner*. Retrieved from https://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/41038_strdrnec.pdf

² Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2019). *Nursing in Canada, 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.cihi.ca/en/nursing-in-canada-2018>

³ Martin-Misener, R., Donald, F., Kilpatrick, K., Bryant-Lukosius, D., Rayner, J., Landry, V., Viscardi, V., & McKinlay, R. J. (2015). *Benchmarking for nurse practitioner patient panel size and comparative analysis of nurse practitioner pay scales: Update of a scoping review*. Retrieved from https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ccapnr/documents/np_panel_size_study_updated_scoping_review_report.pdf

⁴ Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2012). *Health care in Canada, 2012: A focus on wait times*. Retrieved from https://secure.cihi.ca/free_products/HCIC2012-FullReport-ENweb.pdf

⁵ Canadian Nurses Association. (2017). *Nurse practitioners in rural and remote communities* [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from <https://www.cna-aiic.ca/-/media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/nurse-practioners-in-rural-and-remote-communities-fact-sheet.pdf>