



HPNA Position Statement

Value of the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse in Palliative Care

Background

The National Consensus Project's *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care* and The National Quality Forum's *National Framework and Preferred Practices for Palliative and Hospice Care* establish both the standards for access to, and provision of high quality palliative care. These guidelines reflect a multidisciplinary orientation to addressing the need for primary and specialty level palliative care in multiple settings in order to achieve the best possible quality of life through relief of suffering, control of symptoms, and restoration of functional capacity while remaining sensitive to the personal, cultural and religious values, beliefs, and practices of patients and families.^{1,2} Nurses, by virtue of their education and scope of practice, promote the principles of palliative care in all settings.³

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are a subset of nurses prepared at the graduate level to provide direct patient care with licensure and credentialing reflecting this advanced preparation.⁴ Their practice builds on the practice of registered nurses to achieve a greater depth and breadth of knowledge and an ability to synthesize complex data to develop, implement, and coordinate comprehensive holistic patient centered plans of care with goals of maximizing health, quality of life, and functional capacity.^{5,6} These goals align with goals of palliative care, making APRNs uniquely qualified and positioned to address the myriad needs of individuals facing life-threatening, progressive illness. APRNs have the knowledge and clinical judgment to provide primary palliative care in all settings including advanced care planning.^{3,7}

APRNs who have specialty preparation in palliative care through education and/or clinical practice function as palliative care experts in the clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner roles.^{4,6} Certification as Advanced Practice Hospice and Palliative Nurse (ACHPN®) validates this specialization.⁸ The value of the advanced practice palliative nursing role extends beyond specialized and expanded knowledge, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice to enhanced communication skills that facilitate direct patient care through informed decision-making, patient and family education, and psychosocial-spiritual care.⁹ The presence of APRNs in diverse care settings broadens access to palliative care.

Although APRNs have role autonomy, collaboration with other providers (e.g., physicians, social workers) must occur to provide optimal interdisciplinary palliative care.³

The quality and cost effectiveness of advance practice nursing care are well established.^{10,11} In palliative care, APRN practice demonstrates improved patient outcomes.^{12,13} Palliative APRNs are able to model optimal patient care to all members of the interdisciplinary healthcare team and to assume leadership roles in education, practice, research, and public policy arenas.^{9,14,15}

Position Statement

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses represent a valuable resource in national efforts to improve care and quality of life for all Americans and their families living with advanced, life-threatening illness and conditions. In order to maximize utilization of this resource and improve access to high quality palliative care, leaders in the clinical professions, nursing educators, health service providers, healthcare payers, and public policy advocates are urged to continue to pursue the following actions:³

- PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS in nursing, medicine, hospice, and palliative care are called on to support and further the APRN role in palliative care as both part of the interdisciplinary team and as independent practitioners.
- NURSING EDUCATORS must become knowledgeable about palliative care and expand the following areas:
 - Continuing education to prepare and develop existing APRNs in palliative care competencies across all health settings.
 - Integration of core palliative care competencies into academic programs for all APRN students regardless of role or degree.
 - Provision of academic programs for APRN students who intend to specialize in palliative care.
 - Provision of clinical mentoring programs in palliative nursing that meet HPNA Standards for Clinical Practicum in Palliative Nursing for Practicing Professional Nurses (CPPN)¹⁶
- PAYERS OF HEALTH SERVICES are called on to recognize the specialty of palliative care and provide practicing palliative APRNs with adequate and consistent compensation and reimbursement that is commensurate with APRN scope of practice, authority, and responsibility, regardless of practice setting.
- INDIVIDUAL STATE BOARDS OF NURSING are called on to work toward implementation of the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification, and Education and consistently recognize the APRN scope of practice.
- HEALTH SYSTEMS OR HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS are called upon to develop or expand palliative care practice opportunities for APRNs across all settings.

- ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES who practice specialty palliative care are directed to document and disseminate the outcomes of their practice experience and roles, participate in interdisciplinary research and its publication, and translate research findings into practice.
- ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES who practice as specialists in palliative care are charged to seek certification in their specialty through the National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses (NBCHPN®) and to mentor a new generation of palliative care APRNs.

Definition of Terms

Palliative care: Patient and family-centered care that optimizes the quality of life by anticipating, preventing, and treating suffering. Palliative care throughout the continuum of illness involves addressing physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs and to facilitate patient autonomy, access to information, and choice.^{2,17,18}

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse: A nurse who has earned a graduate level degree in nursing from an accredited program, and is prepared to provide direct patient care that involves independent judgment, synthesis of complex assessment data, initiation of care plan and treatment regimens, and to evaluate healthcare environments. The APRN demonstrates advanced clinical knowledge and skills through certification and licensure in core role and population-based foci. Specialty practice, such as advanced practice palliative nursing, represents a specific focus of practice within APRN core role and population. Specialty certification is obtained from a national certification accrediting body. Nurses who have earned graduate degrees and practice in roles and specialties that do not involve direct patient care and do not require licensure beyond that of Registered Nurse play important roles in assuring high quality patient care and advancement of professional nursing but do not practice in the APRN role.⁴⁻⁶

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