Why Full Nursing Practice Benefits Health in WV

Nurses functioning at the full scope of education and certification improves health of West Virginians. To understand why, it helps to understand the difference between the focus of the professions of Nursing and Medicine.

Health Care Continuum

Illness <----------+++----------> Health

Medicine Nursing

Medicine and Nursing are separate and autonomous professions that work side by side on the healthcare team. Each profession has a unique focus. Medicine focuses its attention toward the left on the continuum. Nursing focuses its attention toward the right on the continuum. There is an interface (+) in the middle where the use of certain healthcare strategies like prescribing medication overlap. Nursing, has never worked under the oversight of any other profession including Medicine.

Health reform focuses on early access to less costly health education, health promotion, wellness and care coordination (primarily nursing skills) instead of waiting until illness is obvious or advanced. This is why the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published a major report on *Future of Nursing* (2010). This report focuses on strengthening Nursing's role for cost effective health outcomes. **Their #1 recommendation** is to remove statutory barriers that stop nurses, especially advanced practice nurses (APRNs), from providing the full scope of what they are educated & certified to do.

APRNs include Nurse Practitioners, Nurse-Midwives, Nurse Anesthetists and Certified Nurses in various specialties. APRN practice includes: 1) evaluation of patients, 2) diagnosis of patient problems, 3) ordering & interpretation of diagnostic tests and 4) initiation & management of treatments to address patient problems or potential problems.

Some APRNs have prescriptive authority. This has been the case for over 40 years in the US. Prescribing medication is a skill used by both Nursing and Medicine in different ways to accomplish their unique goals with consumers.

The most important benefit of full practice authority is **enhanced consumers access** to timely, high quality, cost effective healthcare and health promotion services. *(Changes in Healthcare Professions' Scope of Practice: Legislative Considerations 2006)*

Medicine and nursing are professions that always use consultation and coordination in service delivery as part of their ethical standards.

When more people have access to earlier care and screening the quality of health improves as costs are reduced.

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