

## *Scope of Practice for Nurse Practitioners*

### **Professional Role**

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are licensed, independent practitioners who practice in ambulatory, acute and long-term care as primary and/or specialty care providers. They provide nursing and medical services to individuals, families and groups accordant with their practice specialties. In addition to diagnosing and managing acute episodic and chronic illnesses, NPs emphasize health promotion and disease prevention. Services include ordering, conducting, supervising, and interpreting diagnostic and laboratory tests, prescribing pharmacological agents and non-pharmacologic therapies, and teaching and counseling patients, among others.

As licensed, independent clinicians, NPs practice autonomously and in collaboration with health care professionals and other individuals. They serve as health care researchers, interdisciplinary consultants and patient advocates.

### **Education**

NPs are advanced practice nurses - health care professionals who have achieved licensure and credentialing well beyond their roles as registered nurses (RNs). All NPs obtain graduate degrees and many go on to earn additional post-master's certificates and doctoral degrees. Didactic and clinical courses provide NPs with specialized knowledge and clinical competency which enable them to practice in primary care, acute care and long-term care settings. Self-directed continued learning and professional development are hallmarks of NP education.

### **Accountability**

The autonomous nature of NP practice requires accountability for health care outcomes and thus national certification, periodic peer review, clinical outcome evaluations, a code for ethical practice, evidence of continued professional development and maintenance of clinical skills. NPs are committed to seeking and sharing information that promotes quality health care and improves clinical outcomes. This is accomplished by leading and participating in both professional and lay health care forums, conducting research and applying findings to clinical practice.

### **Responsibility**

The role of the NP continues to evolve in response to changing societal and health care needs. As leaders in primary and acute health care, NPs combine the roles of providers, mentors, educator, researchers and administrators. They also take responsibility for advancing the work of NPs through involvement in professional organizations and participation in health policy activities at the local, state, national and international levels.