Nurse-Managed Health Clinics

Improving Access to High Quality Cost-Effective Health Care

As millions of previously uninsured individuals gain access to health coverage in 2014, **one-fifth** of Americans live in areas that are already experiencing a shortage of primary care providers. Policymakers across the nation are looking for innovative ways to expand the health care workforce. More than 30 years of research provides evidence that nurse practitioners (NP) and NP-led nurse-managed health clinics (NMHC) have demonstrated the capacity to **expand access to high quality, evidence-based primary and preventive care.**

**Expanding Access**

- According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, **NPs are the primary care providers most likely to be working in rural or remote areas.** As of January 2014, the Health Resources and Services Administration has designated 5,991 primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas, reflected limited access to care experienced by nearly 60 million individuals.

- NMHC data collected by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Bureau of Primary Health Care’s Uniform Data System from 2012 indicates that **95%** of NMHC patients are low-income and **64%** are racial and/or ethnic minorities.

- A 2013 study by the RAND Corporation featured in Health Affairs projected that **greater use of nurse-managed health centers could alleviate pressures** on the primary care workforce.

- According to the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, **89% of NPs are trained in primary care,** and more than 75% practice in primary care settings. Based on HRSA’s National Sample Survey of Nurse Practitioners, 60,407 NPs practiced primary care in 2012.

- HRSA’s 2012 survey of nurse practitioners also reports that approximately 10% of NPs practice in federal clinics, rural health clinics, and/or NMHCs. This amounts to **approximately 15,000 NPs extending access to primary care.**

**High-quality, Cost-effective Primary and Preventive Care**

- A systematic review of **18 years** of literature on advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) concluded that APRNs, including NPs, provide effective and high-quality patient care.†

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In 2009, researchers showed that nurse practitioners provide care of equivalent quality to physicians at a lower cost, while achieving high levels of patient satisfaction and providing more disease prevention counseling, health education, and health promotion activities than physicians.²

After insurance reform in Massachusetts, the state demonstrated that they could gain a cost savings of $4.2 to $8.4 billion over a 10-year period from increased use of nurse practitioners.³

A worksite clinic run by a single nurse practitioner resulted in direct medical cost savings of nearly $2.18 million over a two-year period, without including indirect savings related to reduction of lost productivity and absences.⁴

Clinics run by nurse practitioners create cost savings associated with reduced use of emergency rooms, urgent care centers, hospitals, and emergency medical services.⁵

Nurse-managed clinic patients have higher rates of generic medication fills at pharmacies, and lower rates of hospitalizations when compared to patients of similar providers.⁶

A 2011 study published in Nursing Administration Quarterly found that overall, quality measures for NMHCs compared favorably with national benchmarks, particularly in the area of chronic disease care management.

**NMHCs Developing the Nursing Workforce**

A 2012 study by the Rand Corporation predicts that the overall number of trained NPs will increase 94% from 128,000 in 2008 to 244,000 in 2025.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s 2012-2013 Enrollment and Graduations Survey, 79,659 qualified applications were turned away from entry-level baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2012.

NMHCs often serve as clinical education sites for nurses and other healthcare providers such as physicians, physician assistants, pharmacists, and social workers. Ninety-six percent of respondents to NNCC’s 2012 membership survey reported that their NMHCs serve as training sites for students in nursing and other health professions programs.

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**About the National Nursing Centers Consortium** - A critical supporter of nurse-managed health clinics in the United States, National Nursing Centers Consortium (NNCC) works to advance nurse-led health care through policy, consultation, programs and applied research to reduce health disparities and meet people’s primary care and wellness needs. The nation’s 250 nurse-managed health clinics reduce health disparities by providing high quality comprehensive primary health care, health promotion and disease prevention services to uninsured, underinsured and vulnerable patients in rural, urban and suburban communities.

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³ Id.