

Secretary Robert A. McDonald
US Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20422-0001

As a Nurse Practitioner I am in support of the proposed rule (RIN: 2900-AP44-Proposed Rule – Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (81 Fed. Reg. 33155, May 25, 2016)) which addresses the growing demand for health care services within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) by allowing our nation's Veterans to have direct access to high quality health care delivered by Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), including nurse practitioners (NPs).

As you know, over 6,000 APRNs (of which over 4,000 are NPs), currently provide a full range of services to our Veterans in the VHA. The safety of APRN services has long been recognized by the VHA and underscored by peer-reviewed scientific studies. These studies have consistently shown that the care provided by APRNs practicing to the full scope of their education and preparation is equal to the care of their physician counterparts. This large and ever growing body of evidence has led the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), AARP, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the National Governors Association, and the Federal Trade Commission to encourage providing patients direct access to APRNs (Institute of Medicine and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010).

Many of our Veterans are older adults with multiple chronic conditions. APRNs specializing in geriatrics demonstrate proficiency in comprehensive physical, social, cognitive and functional assessments guiding the development and implementation of an effective plan of care. In addition, the geriatric specialist provides proficient coordination and management of complex issues in order to optimize health-related outcomes.

Expanding APRN practice to full practice within the VHA will improve access to care, reduce the dire shortage of PCPs, and greatly reduce the increasing delays in access to care that are now epidemic across the U.S., and will overarchingly decrease healthcare costs for our veterans and their families while increasing patient access to safe and optimal care.

I strongly encourage you to support this proposed rule. By finalizing and implementing this rule you will be ensuring that our Veterans receive timely, high quality health care. Swift enactment of this policy update will provide Veterans with direct access to the safe, high quality, patient-centered care that APRNs have provided for more than 50 years.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Institute of Medicine and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2010). The Future of Nursing: Focus on Scope of Practice. Retrieved from The future of nursing website: www.iom.edu/nursing