

Collegiality, Continuity of Care and Cost Savings
By Joan L. Huffman, MD, FACS, CWS, FACCWS

Coning together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress,. Working together is success. Henry Ford

The Florida Medical Association (FMA) has actively lobbied to restrict autonomy of Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNPs) by limiting their prescriptive privileges of controlled substances. A bill to lift this restriction was on the 2011 Florida legislative agenda but did not make it out of committee. The Duval County medical Society had supported FMA in these efforts and both organizations cite patient welfare and safety considerations as the basis of their stand.¹ Yet these concerns have not been issues in 48 states that do allow full prescriptive rights for ARNPs(exclusions Florida & Alabama) and the 48 states that include Physicians Assistants (PA-Cs) (exclusions Florida & Kentucky).²

In 2011, an evidenced based approach should be used to examine the question of the extent of privileges granted to advanced practice providers-ARNPs and PA-Cs. The trauma literature has already demonstrated decreased length of stay and continuity of care when physician extenders are employed in in-patient care.

As health care costs mount astronomically, the utilization of ARNPs & PA-Cs, can increase access to delivery of care and decrease cost, both to patients and the medical system. Estimated of potential cost savings from expanding ARNP and PA-C scope of practice range from 7 million to 44 million annually for Medicaid, 744,000 to 2.2 million for state employee health insurance, and 339 million across Florida's health care system.²

On a personal note, I have worked side by side with both doctors, PA-Cs and ARNPs in the austere environment of Haiti, and have found that the extenders functioned much more efficiently and realistically. In mu daily practice with the Acute Care Surgical Service and the University of Florida at Shands Jacksonville, ARNPs and PA-Cs are indispensable. They are the glue that holds the team together, the agent of continuity, and the link between patients, residents, and attending staff. They also share in the education of residents, imparting knowledge of both patient care and system function.

Recently, The Institutes of Medicine released a report calling for nationwide changes in state laws regulating ARNPs. In addition, it was recommended that ARNPs should practice to the full extent of their education and training³.

¹ Fact Sheet. Nurses should not be authorized to prescribe controlled substances. Florida Medical Association (SB 188 by Sen. Mike Bennett HB 677 by Rep/ Juan Zapata) DCMS website; <http://www.dcmsonline.org/legislative/2010Legislative/FactSheet2010ARNP.pdf>. Accessed 4/15/2011

² Research Memorandum. Expanding the Scope of Practice for Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Optometrists and Dental Hygienists. The Florida Legislature: Office of program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. http://www.cap-pac.org/resources/OPPAGA+Scope+of+Practice+Memo_1-13-2011.pdf. Accessed 4/15/2011

³ The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, advancing health. Report Brief. October 2010. Committee on the Future of Nursing, at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Initiative on the Future of Nursing at the Institute of Medicine. <http://www.cap-pac.org/resources/IOM+OCT+2010+Future+of+Nursing.pdf>. Accessed 4/15/2011

The time has come to set our egos aside and to practice as colleagues, not adversaries. The scope of practice should be broadened to permit the widest range of autonomy within the educational limits of both PAC-Cs and, ARNPs, and ARNP PhDs.

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May 2, 2011
Board of Directors
c/o Duval County medical Society
555 Bishopgate Lane
Jacksonville, FL 32204

Dear DCMS Board of Directors:

Effective may 4, 2011 I hereby tender my resignation as the Editor-in Chief of *Northeast Florida Medicine*, the Chair of DCMS Journal and Communications Committee, and a Member of the Beals'/Shalin Awards Committee.

I have served faithfully, first as an Associate Editor form 2007-2010, and currently as Editor-in Chief, from 2010 to present date. I have contributed two CME articles, collaborated with my medical colleagues to produce an article, and independently wrote a review article; in addition as a member of the Journal and Communications Committee, I actively reviewed articles for two issues per year.

As Editor-in –Chief, since 2010, I have chaired the Journal and Communications Committee; have edited all articles for seven issues, written for the Special Section –Haiti Relief Efforts, and produced seven editorials (including current Editorial for the Summer, 2011 Issue which you have declined to publish.)I have worked side by side with the Managing Editor, Mrs. Leora Legacy, to produce issues that have been not only well accepted, but acclaimed. I leave this position with the journal well prepared for the upcoming years, with a topic and Guest Editor planned for each of the remaining issues for 2011, as well as topics for 2012.

Mr. Jay Milson, Executive Vice President, and Dr. Malcolm Foster, President of Duval County Medical Society requested an amendment or retraction of my Editorial for the Summer 2011 Issue on the subject of independent practice of physician extenders.

The article clearly stated the official opinion of both the Florida medical Association, as well as the Duval County medical Society. I then asked readers to look at evidenced based literature, the impact on health care costs and the Institute of Medicine /Robert Woods Johnson Foundation Report, which recommended allowing physician extenders to practice to the full extent of their education and training. The DCMS Administration feels that his Editorial Opinion piece, places them in a “compromising position.”

I feel that to continue to represent an organization that censures free speech and individual opinion would compromise my personal and moral ethics.

Likewise I give notice of my resignation from the DCMS Board of Directors, the DCMS Foundation Board of Directors, as well as Membership of the Bioterrorism, Disaster Response and Homeland Security Committee, and any association forthwith.

I also withdraw as Delegate to the Florida medical Association as DCMS will not guarantee my right of free speech as a delegate should this or other sensitive matters come up in the reference Committees or the FMA House of Delegates.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the Duval County Medical Society, and especially with *Northeast Florida Medicine* and Mrs. Leora Legacy. I wish her continued success in her tenure as the Managing Editor and her work with DCMS Historical Book.

Sincerely,

Joan L. Huffman, MD, FACS, CWS, FACCWS
Medical Director, Wound Healing Program
Assistant Professor, Division Acute Care Surgery
Department of Surgery
University of Florida at Shands Jacksonville

Cc:

~Mr. Jay Milson, executive Vice President

~Mrs. Leora Legacy, *Managing Editor Northeast Florida Medicine*

~Journal and Communications Committee