

AACN Talking Points in Response to the AMA's Resolution 211 (Need to Expose and Counter Nurse Doctoral Programs Misrepresentation)

On June 13, 2006, the American Medical Association (AMA) passed Resolution 211 titled *Need to Expose and Counter Nurse Doctoral Programs Misrepresentation*. AACN is concerned that this statement misrepresents the purpose and intent of Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. The following talking points were developed to help nurse educators respond to some of the questions generated by the AMA's action.

- Nursing and medicine are distinct health disciplines that prepare clinicians to assume different roles and meet different practice expectations. DNP programs prepare nurses for the highest level of nursing practice. They do not prepare nurses to be physicians. Transitioning to the DNP will not alter the current scope of practice for advanced practice nurses (APNs) as outlined in each state's Nurse Practice Act.
- No nursing schools offering the DNP are advertising these programs as a course of study to prepare physicians. For a current listing of DNP programs, see <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP/DNPProgramList.htm>.
- The title of Doctor is common to many disciplines and is not the domain of any one group of health professionals. Many APNs currently hold doctoral degrees and are addressed as "Doctor," which is similar to how other expert practitioners in clinical areas are addressed, including clinical psychologists, dentists, and podiatrists. In all likelihood, APNs will retain their specialist titles after completing a doctoral program. For example, Nurse Practitioners will continue to be called Nurse Practitioners.
- Like the AMA, AACN recommends that action be taken against individuals who misrepresent themselves as physicians (or other health professionals) if they are not educated and licensed to assume that specific practice role. This concern extends to any unlicensed personnel who are referred to as "nurses" in physician's offices and other settings.
- AACN supports the AMA's recommendation to clearly identify a clinician's credentials both verbally and on name badges. This recommendation was included in AACN's white paper on the *Hallmarks of the Professional Nursing Practice Environment* released in 2002. Consequently, DNP-prepared nurses would be expected to clearly display their credentials to insure that patients understand their preparation as a nursing provider, just as many APNs, physicians, and other clinicians currently do.
- Nursing is moving in the direction of other health professions by transitioning to the DNP. Medicine (MD), Dentistry (DDS), Pharmacy (PharmD), Psychology (PsyD), Occupational Therapy (OTD), Physical Therapy (PTD) and Audiology (AudD) offer practice doctorates.
- All efforts by the AMA and affiliated groups to block the approval of DNP programs at the state level have failed. Currently, 19 nursing practice doctorates in 17 states are enrolling students, and another 190 DNP are now in development nationwide.

- Some of the many factors which are emerging to build momentum for the move to the DNP include the rapid expansion of knowledge underlying practice; increased complexity of patient care; national concerns about the quality of care and patient safety; shortages of nursing personnel which demands a higher level of preparation for leaders who can design and assess care; shortages of doctorally prepared nursing faculty, and increasing educational expectations for the preparation of other health professionals.
- The Institute of Medicine, Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and other authorities have called for reconceptualizing health professions education to meet the needs of the health care delivery system. Nursing is answering that call by moving to prepare APNs for evolving practice.
- For more information about the transition to the Doctor of Nursing Practice, see **<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP>**.

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