BRITISH COLUMBIA

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

Amendments allow nurse practitioners to fulfil expanded role

VICTORIA – The Province today introduced the Nurse Practitioners Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, allowing nurse practitioners (NPs) to work within their existing scope of practice.

Amendments will allow NPs to act as an effective first point of contact as well as primary care providers for patients. A number of current statutes restrict NPs from providing services that are within their scope of practice.

The changes will also provide British Columbians more options when seeking medical opinions and improve access to a variety of government programs. Some examples include:

Employment Standards Act*:* Gives NPs authority to provide certification for pregnancy leave (including confirmation that an employee is able to return to work); for parental leave; and, for compassionate care leave. The amendments increase options for quality primary and community healthcare and support families during a critical time.

Crime Victims Assistance Act*:* Even though NPs are primary caregivers, they are currently prevented from providing diagnoses if a patient has sustained psychological harm that allows them to be eligible for benefits under this act. The amendment eliminates the need for a second opinion from a psychologist or doctor when they are already the patient of a NP. It also provides social service and crime victim assistance agencies with another option of primary care provider to support timely decisions on whether a person qualifies for benefits.

Corrections Act: When accepting a person into custody, correction centres prefer, where possible, to have health examinations conducted by the person's existing primary care practitioner. Allowing NPs to certify the health and fitness of their patients will improve efficiency in the judicial system by expediting the processing of people into custody.

Nurse practitioners were introduced in B.C. in 2005 to fulfil additional roles in areas like primary care, chronic disease, disease prevention and health promotion. NPs are registered nurses (RNs) with additional education at the master's degree level, and have an expanded scope of practice over traditional RN roles, however, they are not doctors. There are currently over 200 NPs in British Columbia.

Quotes:

Michael de Jong, Minister of Health –

"We listened to the concerns brought forward by nurse practitioners about how they can fulfil their expanded role within the health-care system. The amendments introduced today will empower nurse practitioners to provide patients with the care they need in a timely fashion."

Laurel Brunke, CEO/registrar, College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia –

"The College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia is pleased to work collaboratively with government and NPs to ensure that nurse practitioners can competently fulfil this expanded role."

Lorine Scott MN NP(F), BC Nurse Practitioner Association president –

"On behalf of the BC Nurse Practitioner Association and as a practicing Nurse Practitioner in B.C., I am very pleased to see this legislation. Including the title 'nurse practitioner' in the amendments reviewed will enhance the patient's health-care experience and ensures that patient's needs related to the practices/processes covered in the legislation happen in a timely, simplified manner. Overall this action contributes to a more effective, efficient and cost-effective system for both patients and providers."

Quick Facts:

Nurse practitioners can do the following:

- Meet many health-care needs of the community, increasing access to quality primary and community health care.
- Provide services from a holistic nursing perspective, integrating elements such as diagnosing, prescribing, ordering diagnostic tests and managing common acute conditions and chronic illnesses.
- Work in a broad variety of settings including acute care, residential care, mental health and community practice.
- Offer preventative health education and planning that encourages clients to be as healthy as possible and take an active role in health-care decisions.

Twelve acts are being amended:

- Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act.
- Correction Act.
- Crime Victim Assistance Act.
- Employment Standards Act.
- Insurance (Vehicle) Act.
- Interpretation Act.
- Mental Health Act.

- Motor Fuel Tax Act.
- Motor Vehicle Act.
- Offence Act.
- School Act.
- Vital Statistics Act.

Learn More:

For more information on nurse practitioners: http://www.bcnpa.org/

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