

Title: **Physicians' Predictions of the Impact of allowing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to Practice Independently in All States**

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Purpose: To explore physicians' opinions about the impact of expanding the role Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) play in the delivery of health care.

Background:

- Four moderated online focus groups were conducted in October 2010 with physician members of the online community Sermo.com to ascertain primary care and specialist physicians' opinions about a range of issues related to nursing.
- In addition, a March 2011 survey of 889 primary care and specialist physician members of the online community Sermo.com collected physician opinions about a range of issues related to nursing.

Key Findings:

- Nearly half of physicians surveyed agree that "allowing APRNs to practice independently would increase access to primary care in the U.S."
- Physicians are skeptical that allowing APRNs to practice independently would decrease costs.
- Physicians predict there will be a decrease in average quality of care provided to patients if all states allow APRNs to practice independently.
- Panelists predicted a more tiered structure of delivering primary care in five years, with nurse practitioners (NPs), physician assistants (PAs), and others responsible for the bulk of basic, uncomplicated care.
- Most panelists agree that NPs and PAs have appropriate training to assist with wellness exams and minor injuries or illnesses, but that any other medical issues should be handled by a physician.
- All panelists expressed concern about scope of practice "creep," the trend toward APRNs and PAs assuming more of physicians' traditional responsibilities.
- Physician panelists were unanimously against the idea of a NP or PA being able to 'lead' a medical home.

Chart: **Chart 1.** Physicians' Opinions on Effect of Independent APRN Practice on Access, Cost, and Quality

References: This is based on a non-published survey.