



"ACNP seeks to ensure a solid policy and regulatory foundation for nurse practitioner practice which promotes affordable, high quality healthcare for all."

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AACN American Association of Critical-Care Nurses  
ANCC American Nurses Credentialing Center  
GAPNA Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association  
NNCC National Nursing Clinics Consortium  
NONPF National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties  
NPWH National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
NPACE Nurse Practitioner Associates for Continuing Education  
NSO Nurses Service Organization

#### ACNP State Affiliate Organizations

Alabama Advanced Practice Council  
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ARNPs United of Washington State  
Wisconsin Nurses Association, Advanced Practice Nurses Forum

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Nurse Practitioner Group of Spokane  
Northern Advanced Practice Nurses Network (Michigan)  
Illinois Society for Advanced Practice Nursing

# From the President



## Nurse Practitioners: Pioneers Pushing the Boundaries

I recently had the honor of being invited to present a federal legislative update to the Alaska NP Association at their annual conference in Anchorage. What a welcoming and appreciative group of nurse practitioners (NPs)!

In Alaska, NPs are essential to health care delivery. A 2009 survey found that of 75 physicians in Anchorage, only 13 primary care physicians were accepting Medicare patients. At the time, about 42% of non-native elders older than 65 lived in Anchorage, and NPs in that city were often the only providers willing to accept Medicare patients.<sup>1</sup>

Alaska NPs often work in "the bush" where they are truly the sole source of health care. In July 2008, in a senatorial colloquy supporting the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, Alaskan United States Senator Lisa Murkowski said, "Some areas of Alaska are so rural and isolated they are primarily served by providers who use airplanes as their mode of transportation. Among these providers are NPs who often are the most accessible providers in some areas of rural Alaska."<sup>2</sup>

Lois Rockcastle (2011 Alaska NP of the Year and past ACNP state affiliate representative) took me to visit Kerry Dorius, an NP whose clinic is the only source of health care in Girdwood, a small town in rural Alaska. Kerry, in her jeans and cowboy boots, welcomed our drop-in visit and proudly showed us her spacious and well-equipped clinic, complete with an X-ray machine, slit lamp, and telemedicine hook-up. Native art decorated her waiting room walls, which included a framed picture of Kerry with Senator Murkowski and a community service award from the Rotary Club. Kerry has been serving the Girdwood community for 13 years. I loved the T-shirt she gave me, which said: "I got fixed at Girdwood Clinic." Fortunately, I did not need fixing, but I sure came away impressed by Kerry Dorius.

Being in beautiful Alaska reminded me of the pioneering spirit that defines the NP role. The term pioneers conjures up many words: *risk takers, boundary pushers, first to try something* are a few. If NPs can practice to the full extent of their scope of practice in rural Alaska, shouldn't that be the national norm? NPs must keep pushing the boundaries toward the goal of being full partners on the health care team, in every setting, whether we serve rural Alaskans, housebound elders in lower Manhattan, or children in a high poverty urban school. Our scope of practice should not be defined by geography alone.

My year as your president has flown by and it is time to step down. We must keep pushing the boundaries and taking the risks so that our patients are served. It has been an honor to serve you. I will continue to contribute in whatever ways I can.

Happy Holidays!

#### References

1. Frazier R, Foster M. How hard it is for Alaska's Medicare patients to find family doctors. University of Alaska Research Summary No.14, Institute of Social and Economic Research. 2009. [http://hss.state.ak.us/healthcommission/200905/iser\\_doctors.pdf](http://hss.state.ak.us/healthcommission/200905/iser_doctors.pdf). Accessed September 23, 2011.
2. Murkowski L. *Congressional Record*. July 9, 2008. S6486.

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ACNP President 2011

1555-4155/11/\$ see front matter  
© 2011 American College of Nurse Practitioners  
doi:10.1016/j.nurpra.2011.09.017