



Nurse practitioners are a fixture at private practices, hospitals, and other healthcare facilities, so it might surprise you to learn that they've been active members of the medical field for less than 50 years. In 1965, Dr. Henry Silver and Dr. Loretta Ford established the first nurse practitioner education program at the University of Colorado. By 1980, there were more than 200 nurse practitioner training programs and 15,000 to 20,000 nurse practitioners.

As of 2009, there were more than 125,000 active nurse practitioners in the United States. These nurse practitioners provide care to millions of people each year. Locally, the Nurse Practitioners of Northeastern Pennsylvania gives advanced practice nurses the opportunity to network with each other and fight for legislative change.

### **Local Professional Development and Advocacy**

Nurse Practitioners of NEPA is open to active nurse practitioners, retired certified registered nurse practitioners, and nurse practitioner students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Right now, there are more than 270 active nurse practitioners in Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Wyoming counties. Rachel Frable, RN, BSN says joining the Nurse Practitioners of NEPA is a "great opportunity to meet people and network with others." The organization is a member group of the Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners, giving members access to professional development opportunities, nurse practitioner job listings, and mentoring. The Coalition is also very active in lobbying for legislation that will advance the profession and have a positive impact on patient care.

The local organization has received several proclamations from Mayor Thomas Leighton of Wilkes-Barre and Mayor Chris Doherty of Scranton. The group also received a proclamation from the Lackawanna County Commissioners in November 2012. In addition to advocating for nurse practitioners, group members are extremely active in the local community. Members recently made holiday donations to Ruth's Place, Women's Resource Center, Wilkes-Barre Free Clinic, VNA Hospice, Catherine McAuley Center, St. Francis Kitchen in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, and the Leahy Clinic at the University of Scranton. They also provided assistance to local flood victims in 2011.

Nurse Practitioners of NEPA also has several committees dedicated to advancing the profession and promoting NP education and training in Northeastern Pennsylvania. These committees include the scholarship committee, bylaws committee, conference committee, and mentoring committee. One of the biggest events held by the organization is the annual primary care conference, which will take place on May 10, 2013, at the Henry Student Center at Wilkes University. This year's conference will focus on pharmacology, giving nurse practitioners the opportunity to expand their knowledge of antimicrobial therapy, pharmacogenetics, drug therapy in renal failure, antiplatelet and anticoagulant agents, and antiepileptic medications.

### **Networking and Education Opportunities**

The primary care conference will open with registration and breakfast from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. Opening remarks will be followed by a presentation titled "Assessment of Kidney Function and Drug Prescribing in Chronic Kidney Disease" by Edward Foote, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS. Dr. Glen Digwood will present "Anticoagulants and Antiplatelet Drugs" from 9:45 to 11:00 a.m. and Dr. Shubhra Shetty will present "An Approach to Antimicrobial Therapy" from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Afternoon events include "Pharmacogenetics" by Dan McCune, PhD and "Antiepileptic Medications: Out With the Old and in With the New." The event also includes a buffet lunch. Attendees will have the opportunity to network with each other, develop their clinical skills, and interact with vendors. The cost to attend is \$100 for Nurse Practitioners of NEPA members; \$125 for non-members; and \$50 for students or retirees. Participants who register by April 17, 2013, are eligible for a discounted fee of \$75.

### **Advocacy Promotes Change**

The Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners has played an important role in advancing the profession and ensuring that nurse practitioners have the autonomy they need to deliver high-quality care to their patients. As of August 2012, CRNPs in Pennsylvania will be authorized to sign patient death certificates. In 2007, the passage of Act 48 authorized nurse practitioners to refer their patients to dietitians, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and respiratory therapists; order durable medical equipment, home health services, and hospice care; issue oral orders as permitted by the bylaws and regulations of healthcare facilities; perform methadone treatment evaluations; and perform disability assessments for the TANF program.

Past regulatory initiatives include the expansion of the Controlled Substance Prescriptive Authority, removal of the physician co-signature requirement in long-term care settings, and clarification of Department of Health regulations in allowing oral and written orders by CRNPs in hospitals. Organization members also worked to get NPs signatory authority for driver's license physical examinations, disability plates and placards, teacher physical examination forms, and municipal police officer training. PCNP has protected nurse practitioners and promoted professional practice by sponsoring an annual education conference, establishing an electronic mailing list, and monitoring meetings of the Board of Nursing.

As the role of the nurse practitioner continues to evolve, local nurse practitioners will be able to rely on the Nurse Practitioners of NEPA and the Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners to

advocate for positive changes that will strengthen the profession. To learn more about becoming a member of the local organization, visit [www.npnepa.org](http://www.npnepa.org). If you plan to attend the primary care conference, submit your registration form and payment to the following address:

Nurse Practitioners of Northeastern PA  
c/o Robin Gallagher  
1636 Birch Street  
Scranton, PA 18510

## **Sidebar 1**

### **Nurse Practitioner Timeline**

1965: First nurse practitioner program established at the University of Colorado

1974: ANA establishes the Council of Primary Care Nurse Practitioners

1975: First continuing education symposium for nurse practitioners held at the University of Colorado

1985: Professionals establish The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, drawing more than 100 members by the end of its first year in existence

1986: *Journal of the AANP* is established

1989: Approximately 90 percent of NP programs are master's or post-master's programs

1991: AANP establishes the AANP State Awards for NP Excellence

1992: An article in the *Yale Journal on Regulation* supports the role of the nurse practitioner

1994: An article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* lends further support to the idea that nurse practitioners provide cost-effective, high-quality care

1999: The United States has an estimated 60,000 nurse practitioners

2000: AANP hosts first international nurse practitioner conference in the United States; AANP creates the Political Action Committee

2003: The United States has an estimated 97,000 nurse practitioners, an increase of more than 60 percent in just four years

2004: Congress recognizes National Nurse Practitioner Week with an official proclamation

2005: Nurse practitioners celebrate 40 years of practice

2007: AANP launches NPFinder.com, a portal that helps patients find nurse practitioners in their communities

2010: AANP focuses on issues such as Medicare payment, healthcare reform, and other issues of importance

2010: AANP participates in a White House Office of Health Reform meeting

2013: The American College of Nurse Practitioners and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners merged to form the American Association of Nurse Practitioners