



December 15, 2010

Letter to the Editor
Westman Journal
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Brandon, MB R7A 1E7

Re: A family doctor for every Manitoban: Province (Nov. 24, 2010, p. 3)

Nurse practitioner clinics a good investment

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) applauds Manitoba's decision to introduce nurse practitioner-led quick-care clinics. Putting more resources on the front lines of health care is a good investment.

CNA has long advocated for faster, more responsive care at the community level. The new quick-care clinics mean that small medical problems are less likely to turn into big ones, that wait times will be reduced, and that patients will have better access to the most appropriate care at the right time and at the right place. Physicians will be freed up to concentrate on more complex acute cases while nurse practitioners and other health professionals devote time to patient follow-up, preventive care and health promotion. As Health Minister Theresa Oswald aptly put it, "Every Manitoban deserves access to a family doctor, but they don't necessarily need to see their doctor for every health concern."

Nurse practitioners have a proven track record in helping patients manage conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. They can also take the time to support patients in adopting a healthier lifestyle – an important yet often neglected part of the equation.

Innovations like the new clinics are an important step in ensuring the health system's long-term sustainability as they reduce the long-term costs of more drastic medical interventions and expensive hospitalizations down the road. For example, when the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority introduced a full-time nurse practitioner in one of its nursing homes, transfers to hospital emergency rooms were reduced by 20% and drug costs went down 17% overall, according to a 2009 article in *Canadian Nurse*.

CNA hopes that other provinces follow Manitoba's lead in transforming the health system in a way that respects the time-honoured wisdom that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Sincerely,

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President