



American College
of Physicians

Connecticut Chapter

Health & Public Policy
Committee

Robert McLean, MD, FACP
Chairman

46 Prince Street
New Haven, CT 06519

203-772-0011
Fax 203-785-9352
rmclean@ctmedgroup.com

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To Members of the Committee on Public Health,

I am Dr. Robert McLean, a primary care internist in New Haven, and I represent over 2100 members of the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Physicians. I urge you to resist pressure to pass new legislation H.B. 7161 An Act Revising the Definition of Advanced Nursing Practice which seems to grant APRNs complete freedom to practice medicine. The current regulations were established by legislation passed in 1998 at which time the General Assembly was presented with a prolonged and contentious debate over exactly what the education and training of APRNs involves. Legislators concluded that APRNs were NOT trained in the diagnosis and management of complex medical conditions and therefore must work with a "collaborative agreement" with a licensed physician to ensure that the public health is maintained at an appropriate standard.

Without such a mandated collaborative agreement, patients seeing an APRN will not necessarily have direct access to a physician when complex medical decision-making arises. The patient with complex medical problems – and it can be difficult to know when a straightforward symptom or medical condition is becoming more complex – will clearly be at greater risk of receiving inadequate care. This is a public health safety issue.

In my personal experiences working with APRNs in my practice, they can be excellent clinicians with regards to straightforward medical problems and especially preventive care and counseling. However, they all expressed a clear level of discomfort and uncertainty when more complex medical problems arose or were present chronically. In those situations, the input of a physician (in our case down the hall) was critical for the patient to receive appropriate medical management.

The qualifications and training required to be an APRN in Connecticut have not significantly changed in the past decade. APRNs still do not claim to have extensive training and expertise in the management of complex medical problems (according to the Position Statement on Nurse Practitioner Curriculum of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners). The current regulations on APRN practice have worked well for ten years and there is no compelling reason for a revision.