

Physician-Led Health Care Team Talking Points



The practice of medicine is a calling—one dedicated to healing, serving, and innovating. Physicians undergo rigorous education and extensive residency training to connect with patients, support them through both joyous and challenging moments—from childbirth to complex diagnoses—and provide lifesaving care.

MSMS Position on Physician-Led Care

MSMS firmly believes that every patient, regardless of location, should have access to physician-led care. To that end, MSMS supports a patient-centered, team-based model of care led by physicians.

The Value of Team-Based Care

Physician-led, team-based care:

- Involves physicians and other health professionals working collaboratively, leveraging the unique strengths of each team member.
- Ensures informed decision-making and coordinated information sharing for the patient's benefit.
- Aligns with leadership structures found in business, government, sports, and education—where teams perform best under strong, qualified leadership.

Physicians bring the highest level of training to health care teams, including expertise in:

- Complex differential diagnosis.
- Developing comprehensive treatment plans that address multiple organ systems.
- Ordering and interpreting diagnostic tests within the context of a patient's overall health.

Patient Preferences and Evidence-Based Care

Patients overwhelmingly prefer physician-led care:

- 91 percent believe a physician's education and training are vital for optimal care.
- 95 percent say it is important for a physician to be involved in their diagnosis and treatment.

Evolving payment models, such as accountable care organizations (ACOs) and patient-centered medical homes (PCMHs), prioritize integrated care over siloed approaches, reinforcing the need for team-based care.

Opposition to Independent Practice for Nurse Practitioners

While nurses play an indispensable role in health care, MSMS opposes legislative efforts to grant nurse practitioners (NPs) independent practice authority.

Nurse practitioner training is well-suited for providing preventive care, treating straightforward acute illnesses, and managing uncomplicated chronic conditions. However, NP training and physician training are not equivalent—they are complementary. The most effective health care delivery model maximizes both professions' skill sets through collaboration.

Physician-Led Health Care Team Talking Points Continued



Granting NPs independent practice authority:

- Ignores integrated models of care that deliver better outcomes and cost efficiency.
- Fails to address primary care access issues, as data shows NPs tend to practice in already well-resourced areas, even in states without supervision requirements.
- Increases costs to patients and the health care system, leading to:
 - o Higher out-of-pocket expenses (up to \$119 more per visit).
 - o More referrals to specialists.
 - o Increased diagnostic imaging orders.
 - o Higher opioid prescribing rates.

Contrasting Approaches: Independent Practice vs. Team-Based Care

- **Independent NP practice** leads to further compartmentalization and fragmentation of care delivery.
- **Team-based physician-led care** fosters integration, coordination, and improved patient outcomes.

Despite claims that 27 states offer full practice authority for NPs, only three states truly grant independent practice without additional registration, education, or training requirements.

Addressing Physician and NP Shortages

MSMS acknowledges workforce shortages in primary care and nursing. Solutions require a multi-faceted approach, including:

- Expanding telehealth services.
- Strengthening loan forgiveness programs.
- Recruiting students from underserved areas into medical school.
- Increasing the number of residency training slots.
- Reducing administrative burdens that drive up costs and limit patient care.
- Improving reimbursement for primary care services.

By prioritizing physician-led, team-based care, we ensure that all patients receive the highest standard of care - - comprehensive, coordinated, and rooted in the highest levels of medical training.