

The concept of incorporating into the health care delivery system providers of direct patient care services who are not physicians but who are educated and experienced in the provision of health services is widely accepted in the United States and the State of Maryland.

The State of Maryland was the earliest among the 40 jurisdictions to approve changes in the Medical and Nursing Practices Act to accommodate these new practitioners.

Experience in the State of Maryland in educational programs to prepare these health care workers has been gained at most of the State's leading academic centers in which education of health professionals is emphasized. Nurse practitioners have been trained and educated at the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, and Union Memorial Hospital. Physician's assistants have been educated at Essex Community College. Health Associates have been educated at the Johns Hopkins University School of Health Services, and beginning in the Fall of 1975, The Johns Hopkins University School of Health Services will admit the first students to its new program in nursing education to prepare these students from the outset of their professional careers as experienced capable nurses in this new role. The University of Maryland School of Nursing has developed graduate programs for nurse clinicians to function in the new role.

Experience in different clinical facilities has shown that these practitioners can function in a variety of settings to provide a major portion of the patient care services which respond to the needs for preventive health care, chronic disease management, diagnosis and therapy of a majority of common, nonlife threatening, and self-limited health problems, and advocacy for the patient in coordination of care and referral to appropriate sources of specialized care. The quality of these health services has been at the highest standard, and the acceptability of the new practitioners' roles by recipients of health care has been enthusiastic.

The recognition of the status and professional capability of these practitioners is reflected in the formation of professional societies and accreditation by the established professions and qualifying examinations to certify the competence of the practitioners.

Although the per annum costs of educating such a new health practitioner are high because of the expense of a competent clinical faculty in a ratio which approaches 1:1, the total cost of preparing such a practitioner is much less than the cost of eight to ten years of medical