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**Letter to the Editor**

**The New York Times**

**Response to: "Shortage of Doctors an Obstacle to Obama Goals," April 26, 2009**

**(Published in New York Times Online, May 10, 2009)**

Making better use of advanced practice registered nurses is a crucial component of healthcare reform. These registered nurses can help ensure that as more people gain coverage under reforms, they will have access to primary care and preventive services amid the shortage of primary care physicians [Shortage of Doctors an Obstacle to Obama Goals, April 26].

Nurse practitioners, the fastest growing group of primary care professionals, can relieve burdens on the health care system, provided they qualify for reimbursement under insurance plans. Holders of master's or doctorate degrees and trained to perform comprehensive health assessments, these professionals are licensed to diagnose; order and interpret tests; and prescribe medication – in short, to provide services on par with those offered by primary care physicians.

Advanced practice registered nurses are one solution to expanding access to care to regions and populations that lack adequate healthcare. The key is to integrate this healthcare workforce more effectively into our health care system.

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