

# Florida Medical Association FACT SHEET

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## **NURSES SHOULD NOT BE AUTHORIZED TO PRESCRIBE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

SB 972 by Sen. Saunders

HB by Rep.

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### **FMA Position**

The FMA is strongly opposed to increasing the scope of practice for nurses in relation to the prescribing of controlled substances. A patient who requires a prescription for controlled substances should be under the treatment of a physician to ensure that the condition is being appropriately diagnosed and treated. There is no reason to expand controlled substance prescribing to nurses.

### **Background**

Legislation is being proposed that would allow nurses to prescribe controlled substances. The FMA recognizes the valuable contributions nurses make to the health care delivery team, but it is not in the public's best interest to grant nurses the ability to prescribe controlled substances.

Controlled substances are those drugs that the Federal government has determined to have a high potential for abuse, and should therefore be prescribed by a limited number of professionals. There is no indication that patients who need controlled substances have had an access problem. In fact, the Governor's Office of Drug Control is currently struggling with the issue of too much access to controlled substances in Florida. The Office of Drug Control has collected statistics demonstrating the need for the state to have more oversight and control over controlled substance prescribing. These statistics show that Florida is leading the country in an upsurge of deaths due to controlled substance overdoses.

### **Discussion**

Granting authority for ARNPs to prescribe controlled substances is not in the public's best interest. Inherent within the right to prescribe controlled substances is the need to correctly diagnose the patient. The practitioner must be able to make the appropriate diagnosis and suggest proper treatment options. Controlled substances can easily mask an underlying condition, and MDs and DOs are the only professionals capable of making these determinations. ARNPs simply do not have the required training and medical education necessary to support an expansion of their scope of practice. The requirement for a master's degree of nursing does not apply to all ARNP licensees. The Department of Health records reveal that a significant number of ARNPs do not hold a master's degree, and almost several hundred do not hold a bachelor's degree.

Because of the amount of controlled substances that are available to patients, there is simply no reason to expand the number of prescribers. Widening prescriptive authority without a demonstrated need will increase the amount of abuses in the system.

### **Conclusion**

It is imperative for the safety and welfare of patients and the general public that this legislation not be passed into law. Patients who need controlled substances currently have adequate access, and expanding the number of persons who can prescribe these drugs is simply not warranted.

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