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Correspondence

Letter to the editor: Prescription right ensuring nurses to reach their fullest potential



Dear Editor-in-Chief,

We are glad to see that there are Representatives such as Zhihong Li, who voiced “training nurse practitioners (NPs) in China to improve chronic disease management in primary care settings such as township or rural health centers” at the Fourth session of the 13th National People’s Congress (NPC) [1]. In addition, the *Lancet*, a top medical journal in the world, published a comment calling for a need of training NPs in China [2] and called upon the full potential of nurses in 2019 [3]. We also appeal “offering prescription right to qualified NPs is needed to increase the scope of practice for NPs in China, as there are more than 4 million nurses in the mainland of China, with one-fifth of nurses in the world. Qualified nurses with prescription right will dramatically improve access care for an aging population globally”.

In this letter to the editor, we think that prescription right is a key strategy to ensure nurses reaching their fullest potential. Globally, nurses face challenges due to an aging population and the health care delivery system shifting from acute care to chronic care settings. If nurses have more authority, such as with prescription right, which will alleviate worldwide primary care provider shortages [4]. While the values of nursing are fully described in this editorial [3], how to ensure nurses who are empowered and supported to reach their fullest potentials, offering the prescription right to nurses will be one of the best solutions for them to expand their scope of practice and meet the global aging population’s health needs.

Certainly, the implementation of the NP program is inseparable from the support of related policies. For example, the prescription right, which is one of the main characteristics of NP practice, is an issue that needs to be solved urgently. In 2017, Anhui Province took the lead in piloting the reform of community advanced nursing practitioners with certain prescription rights, which could provide valuable experience for the promotion to offer the prescription right to NPs. Besides the policy support, it needs legislation to protect the rights of NPs in China. We can learn from overseas experiences, such as in Canada, NPs gained the legal authority to independently diagnose, prescribe, and treat with the implementation of the nursing service for patients or clients in primary care settings [5].

As nurses are always at the forefront of health promotion and prevention interventions, and nurses do know more about providing the core elements of basic primary care, we hope that nurses, particularly NPs, can have the prescription right to expand

the scope of nursing practice. Since some representatives provided “Proposal to appropriately granting prescription rights to nurses in the mainland of China” on the Third session of the 13th NPC, the National Health Commission of the people’s republic of China has replied that “it will conduct a national survey about the necessity and importance of granting prescription rights to nurses.” [6] Therefore, we do hope that the Chinese Nursing Association will invoke policy campaigns and work with the National Health Commission to grant prescription right to nurses to achieve their fullest potential.

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