

# Protecting Patient Safety With Physician-Led Health Care Teams



While all health care professionals play a critical role on a patient's care team, physicians should lead the health care team. Only physicians have the education, training, and experience to ensure the quality and safety of care Texans deserve. Physician-led team-based care emphasizes having the right professional providing the right services to the patient, with physicians managing the overall direction and coordination.

The Texas Osteopathic Medical Association believes lawmakers must protect independent medical diagnosing, treatment, and prescribing as the practice of medicine. Texas also must address workforce shortages in a way that

ensures all patients have access to the same standard of care and keeps pace with Texas' population growth.

In 2013, lawmakers established a collaborative, physician-delegated practice among physicians, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and physician assistants (PAs). That law reinforces the physician-led care team and allows all members of the team greater flexibility. Physicians' training is most extensive. Typical physicians complete 12,000 to 16,000 hours of clinical training, compared with 500 to 1,500 hours for APRNs and 2,000 hours for PAs. Greater education and experience are why physicians should uniquely diagnose and prescribe, and lead the health care team.

## Education Matters Medical Professional Educational and Training Differences

Medical Professional	Length of Graduate Level Education	Years of Residency/Fellowship	Total Patient Care Training Hours
Physician (MD or DO)	4 years	3-7 years	12,000-16,000 hours
Family Physician (MD or DO)	4 years	3 years	10,000-12,000 hours
Anesthesiologist (MD or DO)	4 years	4-6 years	12,000-16,000 hours
Ophthalmologist (MD or DO)	4 years + 1 year internship	3-5 years	12,000-16,000 hours
Psychiatrist (MD or DO)	4 years	4-6 years	12,000-16,000 hours
Nurse Practitioner (NP)	2-4 years (online programs included)	None	500-720 hours

Physicians are trained to lead health care teams, with the highest level of education and **20 times** more clinical training than nurse practitioners. Sources: American Medical Association, American Osteopathic Association, and Texas Medical Association.

### Legislative Recommendations

- ▶ Protect the core principle that independent diagnosing and prescribing are the practice of medicine, to be practiced only by physicians.
- ▶ Strongly oppose any effort to expand scope of practice beyond what is safely permitted by non-physician practitioners' education, training, and skills.
- ▶ Support only those changes to scope-of-practice laws that protect patient safety, are consistent with physician-led team-based care, are based on objective educational standards, and improve patient care with appropriate regulatory oversight by the Texas Medical Board.

**TOMA's Positions** TOMA is monitoring and evaluating several scope-related bills, and has taken a position on these:

### TOMA Opposes:

- ▶ **HB 343** by Rep. Vikki Goodwin, which would give psychologists prescriptive authority.
- ▶ **HB 1767** by Rep. Stephanie Klick, which would mandate hospital privileges for podiatrists.
- ▶ **SB 584** by Sen. Bryan Hughes, which would allow physical therapists to treat patients for 30 days without a physician referral. This bill eliminates a four-year-old scope compromise.

### TOMA Supports:

- ▶ **HB 1770** by Rep. Jacey Jetton, which calls for nurse licensure and disciplinary profiles to appear on the Texas Board of Nursing website the way similar information about physicians appears on the Texas Medical Board website.