



A Historic Milestone for Urgent Care Nurse Practitioners: The Journey to Specialty Certification Begins

■ Lisa H. Bishop, DNP, MSN, MHA, FNP-BC, CDEO, FCUCM

After years of persistence, collaboration, and advocacy, we have reached a historic milestone for the nurse practitioner profession and the specialty of urgent care. The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board (AANPCB) has officially confirmed our petition to begin development of the first Urgent Care Nurse Practitioner Certification.

This announcement represents far more than the creation of a new credential. It is the beginning of a movement to formally recognize the unique body of knowledge, clinical expertise, and decision-making required to practice in today's urgent care environment.

Foundational Work

In September, our inaugural panel of selected urgent care nurse practitioner clinicians and leaders met in Las Vegas to begin the foundational work of defining the certification. Together, we worked to identify the knowledge domains, establish practice standards, and begin outlining the blueprint for what will ultimately become the certification examination.

Next, the panel will reconvene virtually in November to continue refining the examination framework and competency expectations. While certification development is a rigorous, evidence-based process that requires multiple phases of review and validation, our goal is to have the first Urgent Care Nurse Practitioner Certification available in 2027.

Developing a national certification is an extensive undertaking. It begins with defining the scope of practice

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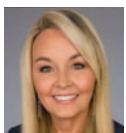
through a comprehensive job task analysis, followed by identifying the competencies that distinguish expert urgent care clinicians. Examination content must be carefully developed, peer-reviewed, and tested to ensure it accurately measures the knowledge and clinical judgment required for safe and effective practice. Every step is designed so the ultimate credential created is meaningful to clinicians, employers, and patients alike.

What This Means for Urgent Care Nurse Practitioners

Urgent care has become one of the fastest-growing and most complex areas of healthcare. Today's clinicians manage everything from acute illnesses and injuries to emergency stabilization, occupational medicine, point-of-care diagnostics, procedures, and increasingly complex medical decision-making in a fast paced environment. Yet despite this specialized practice, no nationally recognized certification exists to acknowledge expertise in urgent care.

That is about to change.

This certification will enable nurse practitioners to demonstrate advanced knowledge and competence in urgent care medicine. It will serve as a nationally recognized designation that distinguishes clinicians who have dedicated themselves to mastering this specialty.



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For nurse practitioners as individuals, certification will provide them recognition as experts in urgent care medicine. It will also validate their specialized knowledge beyond primary care preparation and demonstrate their increased professional credibility with employers, colleagues, and patients.

For employers, specialty certification provides an objective measure of clinician expertise that can support hiring, onboarding, professional development, and quality initiatives. For patients, it reinforces confidence that they are receiving care from clinicians whose knowledge has been validated in the unique practice of urgent care.

Advancing Urgent Care as a Specialty

Perhaps most importantly, this certification represents another significant step toward achieving broader recognition of urgent care as a true medical specialty. Specialty certification helps define standards of practice, establishes professional identity, and elevates expectations for education and competency. It demonstrates that urgent care requires a unique combination of knowledge and skills that extend beyond traditional primary

care or emergency medicine training.

My hope is that this effort will encourage other disciplines practicing within urgent care to pursue specialty certification as well. As our profession continues to mature, standardized specialty credentials will further establish urgent care as an essential component of the healthcare system.

Looking Ahead

While there is still considerable work ahead, this milestone is worth celebrating. The journey from concept to certification requires collaboration, scientific rigor, and unwavering commitment from dedicated clinicians across the country. I am honored to be part of this historic effort and grateful to the many colleagues who have helped make this possible.

The work began in September, continues through the fall, and, if all proceeds as planned, culminates in the launch of the first Urgent Care Nurse Practitioner Certification in 2027. This is only the beginning, and I could not be more excited about what lies ahead for our profession and for the future of urgent care medicine. ■



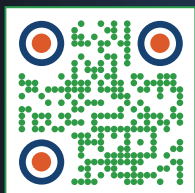
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