

# AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS

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Office of Health Policy: P.O. Box 40130 • Washington, DC 20016 • Phone: 202-966-6414 • Fax: 202-966-2856  
E-mail: [dcoffice@aanp.org](mailto:dcoffice@aanp.org) • Web Site: [www.aanp.org](http://www.aanp.org)

## Comments from the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners for the Task Force on Drug Importation

The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, representing the 97,000 advanced practice nurse practitioners throughout the United States, is acutely aware of the problems created by the high cost of prescription drugs in this country. As primary care clinicians who prescribe medications for their patients on a regular basis, nurse practitioners are reminded daily of the negative impact those costs have on the health of their patients. Patients often do not fill their prescriptions or partially fill prescription because they are cost prohibitive. They often take insufficient doses to make their medication last longer, or take medication temporarily until the next paycheck or pension check comes in order to make ends meet. The result is poor management of illnesses, poor quality of life and increased need for hospitalizations and emergency room care.

The inability of patients to pay for prescription drugs actually increases the costs of medical care. When medications cannot be taken as directed, the risk for increased hospitalizations and emergency room visits multiplies. It is in the best interests of the American public that affordable ways to obtain medication be developed.

When considering drug importation as a solution for this problem, we feel that several factors should be taken in consideration:

1. Safety. If drugs are to be imported, it is important to know that they are safe, that they don't have variable doses from tablet to tablet or capsule to capsule, and that their composition consists of the correct therapeutic ingredients.
2. Consumer friendly. If drugs are to be imported, it should be done so that patients can have access in a timely and uncomplicated manner. If too many restrictions are placed on patients, so that it becomes impossible to obtain drugs more cost effectively through this mechanism, then the purpose for drug importation is lost.
3. Access. Patients will need to have access to medications. If access is to be limited, it will need to be conducted in a way that does not obstruct patient access to needed medications.
4. Limiting access to provider groups. If access limitation to provider groups is implemented, nurse practitioners will need to be included, just as physicians would be, in order to facilitate patient access to imported drugs. Savings incurred should be passed on to consumers and not stop at the distributor, pharmacy or practitioner level.

In conclusion, nurse practitioners are acutely aware of the limitations current prescription medications have set on the proper care of their patients and feel that steps do need to be taken to reduce the financial burden experienced by patients in this venue. We are interested in participating with you in your undertakings to explore and make recommendations regarding the importation of drugs. We can be reached at the numbers below.

Jan Towers PhD, NP-C, CRNP, FAANP  
Director of Health Policy  
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners  
Box 40130  
Washington D.C. 20016

Phone 202-966-6414  
Fax 202-966-2856  
Email: [jtowers@aanp.org](mailto:jtowers@aanp.org)