

## COMMENTARY

## Honoring the Advanced Nurse Practitioner

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It is no secret that the role of the nurse practitioner (NP) in health care has been quite controversial ever since its inception in 1965. I have read the American Medical Association and American Academy of Family Physician's position statements on NPs—and they usually feel like a kick in the gut—but they help keep me focused and remind me to pay my annual dues to the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Years ago, my professor warned our class of the political strife we might encounter in our careers and encouraged us to remain steadfast and assertive to any potential bullying. I started my career in a cardiology office that was not at all fond of NPs. It was a belittling experience, and I eventually made a career change. I started fresh at an internal medicine clinic that is part of a large academic medical center. Here, in a culture of mutual respect, I developed strong relationships with my physician colleagues and have been considered faculty to resident physicians.

I was recently invited to the SGIM annual meeting as a presenter for two posters and planned to participate in some of the interest groups. This was my first physician-based conference, and I felt a little apprehensive. Even though I work in an NP-supportive environment, I was prepared to hold my ground to potential physician naysayers. I was relieved on the first day of the conference when my nametag did not display my credentials. I could essentially be anonymous for most of the experience. The NP word first came up in a session on home-based elder health that was presented by a group of physicians who practiced hand in hand with NPs. A member of the audience questioned the competence of an NP practicing independently with the group, and I held my breath for the response. The audience member was met by responses from several other physicians, including the presenter, who enthusiastically supported their NP counterparts and

went as far as to say that an experienced NP is no different from them.

The next day was my poster presentation, and with ANP displayed in large print, I was no longer anonymous. In fact, my poster was at the entrance of the auditorium, one of the first to be seen. I couldn't have been more nervous. I was pleasantly surprised by the foot traffic I received at my presentation and was relieved by the excitement and support of physicians from around the world who found an NP within their midst. I no longer felt like a strange man in a strange land. I was invited to a few lectures and interest groups the following day. People were interested in my perspective as an NP. I could see that a multidisciplinary approach to care was an overriding theme to this year's meeting. I am assertive and passionate in my role as an NP, but I am also humble and appreciative of my experience at the 2014 SGIM Annual Meeting.

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