



## Dear Colleagues,

June is Men's Health Month. The goal for dedicating this month to men's health is to heighten awareness of preventable health problems and promote early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys. Our role as family and friends is to support all of the men in our lives in their efforts to have healthy lifestyles and relationships. We need to tell them about important preventive health screening and immunizations, many of which are the same or similar to those recommended for women, and encourage them to have regular health checkups.

This also is a time for healthcare providers to look at their healthcare setting policies and the services they provide with a focus on how they can meet the specific needs of men and boys. This review extends to women's health nurse practitioners (WHNPs).

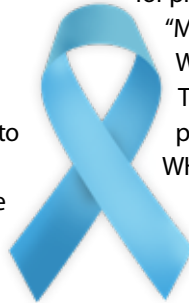
Healthy lifestyles, healthy relationships, preventive health screening, and immunizations are all components of sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Yet for men and boys, there is a gap in SRH care in comparison to that for women. It is often not available or is not promoted, meaning that men and boys are unaware of it. WHNPs can help to fill this gap because they are prepared through their program curricula with well-defined competencies to provide SRH care for individuals inclusive of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

The role of WHNPs in providing SRH care for males is not new. For over two decades, the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH) WHNP guidelines for practice and education has included curriculum content on the evaluation and management of common SRH problems in males. In this same time span, the National Certification Corporation has included male SRH content in its WHNP certification exam.

It is always positive when I hear that my WHNP colleagues are providing SRH care for men. As well, it is encouraging that women's health-focused continuing education forums are including content with a broader view expanding our knowledge and skills related to gender-related health and healthcare. What is disconcerting is when I hear that there are still challenges in the lack of clarity with which some healthcare provider colleagues and employers view the competency, role, and value of WHNPs providing SRH for all patients.

SRH is an important component in both men and women's physical, emotional, and social well-being. Because the SRH of one individual often intertwines with that of another, providing this care inclusive of all gender identities can optimize SRH for patients and partners. WHNPs have variable opportunities to provide and promote SRH care for all individuals and couples within the context of their clinical setting.

Not all clinical practices in which WHNPs are employed provide care for males. WHNPs, however, can give patients information on male SRH that they can share with male partners. In some settings, WHNPs may have been hired to see women and their job description and/or collaborative agreement does not include seeing men for SRH care. For WHNPs who would like to expand the services they provide to include SRH for those of all gender identities, several helpful resources can be used to open this discussion with employers. In addition to the aforementioned WHNP guidelines for practice and education, the NPWH position statements "Male Sexual and Reproductive Health: The Role of the Women's Health Nurse Practitioners" and "Healthcare for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals" provide succinct background and recommendations for WHNPs wanting to provide this care.



If you are considering expanding SRH care to include patients of all gender identities, take a look around your waiting areas and exam rooms. Consider ways to create an environment that is welcoming to all.

Will staff training be needed, clinical forms adapted, and policies updated?

If you have been successful in incorporating this expanded SRH care in your practice, let us know. A way to share is to write a commentary or a short clinical resources article on what you are doing and how you are doing it. Please contact me if you are interested.

Last, I hope you will use your clinical practice to promote Men's Health Month. This can be a poster in your waiting area or something on your social media. Although there are several resources, one I found and like is the Men's Health Network. This national nonprofit organization has health awareness and disease prevention messages and tools, educational materials, and more at [menshealthnetwork.org](https://menshealthnetwork.org).<sup>A</sup>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Kelsey".

Beth Kelsey, EdD, APRN, WHNP-BC, FAANP

### Web resource

A. [menshealthnetwork.org](https://menshealthnetwork.org)