

## **The National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners (NANNP) Position Statement on the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Degree**

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has proposed that all advanced practice nurses (APNs) be prepared with the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree by 2015. While the Executive Council of the National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners (NANNP) supports the establishment of this educational opportunity for those who wish to obtain the degree, we cannot support any predetermined deadline by which APN programs should be at doctoral level preparation.

Decades of evidence has shown that APNs prepared at the master's level provide cost-effective, quality care for their patients and families. However, AACN states that the changing demands of health care have created a climate in which nurses must be educated at the highest level. Further, AACN predicts that enhanced educational preparation will lead to degree parity with other health care professions and assist graduates to assume leadership roles in clinical practice, clinical teaching, and policy development. Despite the endorsement by AACN, a change of this scale requires a systematic assessment of the potential impact of the DNP as entry into advanced practice on the profession of nursing and society as a whole. There is currently no empirical evidence that a DNP prepared APN is superior to that of a Master's prepared APN across practice settings. Additional concerns have been raised regarding market demand for the DNP, costs to society and the health care system, exacerbation of the current shortage of APNs, and procurement of sufficient faculty to teach in DNP programs.

The NANNP Executive Council supports the development of the DNP as one option for neonatal nurse practitioner education, but cannot support the DNP for entry into advanced neonatal practice. The executive council further believes that the Educational Standards for Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Programs, published by NANN in 2002, includes all of the essentials to educate safe, competent neonatal nurse practitioners who provide a high quality of care. NANNP will continue to evaluate evidence as it becomes available related to the benefits and challenges of DNP education for APNs.