



*IntNSA's mission is to advance excellence in nursing care for the prevention and treatment of addictions for diverse populations across all practice settings through advocacy, collaboration, education, research and policy development.*

## **Advanced Practice Nurses should have the ability to prescribe buprenorphine**

There is a need for an amendment to DATA 2000 to allow qualified Nurse Practitioners to prescribe buprenorphine for heroin addiction treatment.

We support H.R. 1729, *Opiate Addiction Treatment Act of 2011*, introduced by Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD). This legislation would amend the Controlled Substances Act to authorize qualifying practitioners to dispense certain narcotic drugs in schedule III, IV, and V for maintenance treatment of detoxification treatment.

Since the DEA letter notifying physicians that they would be inspected by DEA agents, there has been a decrease of 750 physicians qualified to prescribe under DATA.

The total number of qualified physicians is currently 18,780 – down from approximately 20,000 in July 2009. Despite the efforts of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and others, there has been no growth in the number of providers over the last year.

There are currently 94,314 Nurse Practitioners authorized to prescribe Schedule III substances such as oxycodone and buprenorphine. However, they are not allowed to prescribe buprenorphine for addiction treatment because DATA specifies that the practitioner must be a physician. We now have a situation where these practitioners can prescribe oxycontin, but when the patient becomes addicted, they cannot prescribe buprenorphine to get them off the opiate.

In a recent survey of Nurse Practitioners, 33% of respondents (206 of 635) expressed an interest in undergoing DATA training and qualifying to prescribe buprenorphine for addiction treatment. If 33% of NP's who have existing DEA registrations for Schedule III substances were to undergo DATA-mandated training, these practitioners could qualify to treat up to one million patients by the end of next year.

The 2,200 Nurse Practitioners currently in the Department of Defense could expand treatment by 66,000 service men and women by the end of next year.

For more information see our position paper: *The Prescribing of Buprenorphine by Advanced Practice Addictions Nurses* - <http://intnsa.org/publications/documents/BuprenorphinePositionPaperFINAL6-30-11.pdf>