



## NPWH Testimony to the IOM Committee on Preventive Services for Women

The National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH) appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments to the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) Committee on Preventive Services for Women. NPWH is a national, membership organization representing nurse practitioners (NPs) that provide care to women in the primary care setting, as well as in women's health specialty practices. Today, over 130,000 nurse practitioners practice nationwide in a variety of settings such as community health centers, university and student health centers, school health clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, clinics, and private offices. NPs are known for taking the time to answer their patients' questions and address their concerns.

The IOM Committee's charge – to recommend additional preventive services and screenings for women that should be required to be covered by health insurance without cost-sharing – is critically important to women's health. Studies have found that even moderate co-pays for preventive services such as mammograms and Pap tests deter patients from receiving them.

NPWH offers the following recommendations in two areas: coverage of contraception and cervical cancer screening.

### The Need for Coverage of the Full Range of FDA-Approved Contraceptive Drugs and Medical Devices

NPWH agrees with our colleagues in the reproductive health community that contraception is an essential part of preventive healthcare for women. Nurse practitioners have extensive experience in prescribing contraception as well as counseling women about their contraceptive options. On average, US women spend three decades of their lives dealing with contraceptive choices. In those three decades, women's needs change whether because of life circumstances, medical issues, or simply age. It is critical for women to have access to a full range of contraceptive options that they will be most successful with as well as the method that will be safest for them.

NPWH urges the IOM Committee to include **all forms** of FDA-approved contraceptive drugs and medical devices in the list of preventive health services without cost-sharing. The list of options should include the available short-term options and long-term reversible methods of contraception, such as intrauterine contraceptives and implants. The choices should also include permanent contraceptive for women including newer technology that allows for in-office procedures. Permanent birth control is chosen by 1 in 4 women. Vasectomy should also be included as a choice for a couple.

## Cervical Cancer Screening Coverage Should Include HPV Co-Testing

NPWH works to educate women that cervical cancer is preventable with the Pap test, the HPV test, and the HPV vaccine. Thanks to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the HPV vaccine and the Pap test are required to be covered without cost-sharing. However, the combination of the Pap test plus the HPV test (HPV co-testing) for women 30 and older is currently not covered, because this use of the HPV test is not addressed in the current U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines, which were released in January 2003.

NPWH believes that the IOM Committee should recommend coverage of HPV co-testing as a preventive service for women in accordance with medical professional society guidelines. This would help ensure that women 30 and over, who are at highest risk of cervical cancer, will have coverage for HPV co-testing without the barrier of cost-sharing. Co-testing provides clinical information with near 100% certainty whether a woman is at risk for cervical cancer and allows for wider screening intervals for those women shown not to be at risk.

NPWH appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments. We would be happy to serve as a resource to the Committee on contraception, cancer screening for women, improving maternal outcomes, and other measures that will enhance efforts to prevent or identify health issues specific to women's health.