



For Immediate Release
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WOMEN'S HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONERS OPEN NEW FRONT FOR EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA

WASHINGTON, DC – A recent survey reveals a promising new partner to aid in early diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's Disease and dementia, which disproportionately impact women. Women's health nurse practitioners (WHNPs), highly educated health care specialists, can provide new screenings, and direct pathways to care, for millions of patients nationwide.

The National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH) found the vast majority of surveyed members would welcome additional training and tools to integrate brain health into well-woman visits. Women's health nurse practitioners handled more than 50 million female patient visits in 2016, and two-thirds of the 5.5 million Americans with Alzheimer's are women. But nurse practitioners are currently underutilized in monitoring brain health and making referrals.

"Nurse practitioners are clear that they want and will use new knowledge and resources to assist patients in early detection and treatment of brain disease," said NPWH CEO Gay Johnson. "NPWH is actively seeking funders to provide these trainings and tools, such as seminars, toolkits and apps, that meet our members' needs and those of their patients. Our full engagement in this brain health enterprise will be a game changer for millions of patients and families who trust their primary health care to nurse practitioners. "

The 2017 survey "*Brain Health Is Women's Health*," cosponsored with WomenAgainstAlzheimer's, questioned nearly 1,000 nurse practitioners in community, urban, rural, academic and other settings.

- 84% of WHNPs want more knowledge, training, and tools to assess brain health as an integral part of their holistic approach to women's health care
- 71% of WHNPs raise the issue of brain health with patients at least occasionally
- But 86% lack access to a standard protocol or diagnostic test

Too often, diagnoses of brain diseases aren't made until a patient is already in crisis. Women's health nurse practitioners present an auspicious new avenue to flag early signs of Alzheimer's and dementia.

Access: Women in underserved areas, who may lack access to a physician, increasingly rely on nurse practitioners for their primary health care. Nurse practitioners also take more time with patients than

many doctors can. WHNPs can incorporate brain health assessments into well-woman visits and make more referrals for follow-up care.

Comfort: Nurse practitioners are adept at introducing intimate topics, such as sexual health, with their patients. With proper training and tools, WHNPs can comfortably broach sensitive issues like memory, cognition or confusion.

Trust: Nurse practitioners earn high levels of trust and rapport with their patients. Many older women live alone and a WHNP may be the only person an aging woman confides in about worrisome symptoms. The survey found that in 68% of cases, patients themselves share their symptom concerns with their nurse practitioner.

“America’s nurse practitioners are an untapped national resource for monitoring brain health,” added NPWH CEO Johnson. “With greater awareness, knowledge and tools, they can develop into a frontline force for earlier detection and treatment of Alzheimer’s, dementia and other brain diseases.”

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About NPWH: The National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health (NPWH) mission is to ensure the provision of quality primary and specialty health care to women of all ages by women’s health nurse practitioners and other women’s health focused providers. NPWH seeks to improve women’s access to primary and specialty health care, increase women’s wellness and health outcomes, decrease health disparities affecting women, enhance women’s access to and knowledge of health resources, and protect and promote women’s rights to make choices regarding their health within the context of their personal belief systems. NPWH provides Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) education and resources to increase clinical competencies, advocates for healthcare policies that support women and APRNs, and fosters evidence-based practice in women’s health through research, collaboration with strategic partners and mentoring opportunities. For more information, visit www.npwh.org