

Calif. Senate OKs bill letting nurse practitioners do more

By Patrick McGreevy, Sacramento Bee

SACRAMENTO — Addressing an expected shortage of doctors in California, the state Senate approved a measure Tuesday that would allow nurse practitioners to independently perform more medical functions now within the domain of physicians.

The measure would allow nurse practitioners to have stand-alone practices to provide primary healthcare services independent of physicians including certification of disability claims, prescription of drugs and approving many treatments.

Some Democrats and Republicans opposed the measure by Sen. Ed Hernandez, D-West Covina, because of concern that it would mean a lower level of medical care.

“To allow nurse practitioners to practice without any oversight endangers the community,” said Sen. Hanna-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara. Added Sen. Jim Nielsen, R-Gerber, “I have grave concerns where we are going with medicine in California.”

Sen. Roderick Wright, D-Inglewood, said the alternative for some Californians was to use the Internet to do self-diagnosis and treatment.

“We’re not talking about this person doing brain surgery,” Wright told his colleagues in arguing for SB491. “What you are talking about is providing a basic level of care, which I think they can handle.”