



Registered nurse Maggie Loucks will soon be able to order tests and prescribe medication for her diabetes patients following the completion of a course funded by RhPAP's Rural Education and Advanced Learning (REAL) program. The next application cycle opens Sept. 11.

A registered nurse from Edson hopes to ease the load on area physicians caring for diabetes patients following her completion of a course funded through RhPAP's Rural Education and Advanced Learning (REAL) Program.

Maggie Loucks recently completed RN Prescribing training that permits her to manage diabetes patients out of the McLeod River Primary Care Network without having to clear her work with a physician beforehand.

The RN has worked in diabetes management for about eight years and currently oversees a panel of more than 350 patients within an 80 km radius of Edson.

"Now I'm able to order lab work and basically autonomously manage someone's diabetes care," said Loucks, a chronic disease management nurse.

"I can prescribe their medication to help get their A1C (blood glucose measurement) targets, order their lab work, and do all the follow up myself without having a physician being involved unless something gets a little more complicated. I am able to work to my full scope."

While some of Louck's patients see both her and a physician for diabetes care, others do not have a family doctor.

Those are the patients that Loucks expects will see the greatest change from her new certification.

"I do not have to sit there and say, 'you have to go find a doctor or go sit in a walk-in clinic to get a blood requisition.' Now I can give them a blood requisition and then once the results come in, I am the one who is responsible for reviewing them under my name. It is not attached to a doctor."

Loucks expects the changes will lead to considerable savings in appointment time for diabetes patients and physicians, as well as money overall for the healthcare system.

Within her own diabetes panel, she estimates eliminating up to 300 physician appointments every three months—opening accessibility to other patients who must see a doctor.

“It alleviates the pressure on the doctors because I am not sending all these patients to a physician every three months to get a lab requisition for an A1C and then go back to the physician to follow up with the results.

“I’ve been doing this for a long time, and I know what needs to be done.”

With their diabetes care streamlined, patients will be able to access diabetes care faster since they do not have to wait for a doctor’s input.

At the time of publication, Loucks awaits licensing from her regulating body, the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta, as she is believed to be the first RN from a PCN to have met the criteria.

Loucks says there are RNs with the same responsibility in other healthcare positions so she expects more PCN nurses will eventually follow suit.

“PCNs like to share our work so that we don’t have to duplicate it,” says Loucks.

Taking the course online within her own schedule, coupled with the support of her previous PCN executive director, Loucks was encouraged to enrol in the professional development course.

“That funding portion is amazing because it opens up opportunities,” she says, noting RhPAP reimbursed her for the \$1,150 cost of the course and textbooks.

RhPAP’s [REAL funding](#) assists health professionals including nurses, midwives, nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals access continuing professional development and education opportunities that help enhance the healthcare services they offer in their communities.

REAL’s next funding cycle runs September 11 to October 23. Application information is available [here](#).