

Nurse Practitioners: Meeting the Needs of Patients



There is an ever-increasing need to provide affordable, accessible, quality health care for the people of the United States. People shouldn't have to wait for weeks to see their physician, only to have a 5 minute visit that costs more than a used car. Nurse practitioners (NP) offer one solution to this dilemma. Nurse practitioners have been providing primary care to individuals for over 40 years and today there are over 141,000 NP's in the United States.

What is a Nurse Practitioner?

A nurse practitioner (NP) is an experienced registered nurse (RN) who has completed a master's degree and received education in the diagnosis and management of common health problems. Nurse practitioners provide a variety of health care services and, depending on their education, can see patients of all ages. They provide some of the same care provided by physicians and maintain close working relationships with physicians. A NP can serve as a patient's regular health care provider, conducting physical exams, prescribing medicines and treating illness. Nurse practitioners focus on prevention, wellness, and patient education priorities. They inform patients about their health care and encourage them to participate in decisions, which can mean fewer prescriptions and less expensive treatments.



Nurse Practitioners are highly educated individuals. The educational program completed by NPs must meet the exacting standards set forth in the Curriculum Guidelines and Programs Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education developed by the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties and accredit by either the National League for Nursing or the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.



Where do NP's practice?

Nurse practitioners practice in a variety of settings. Some work in an office with a physician, others work in ER's, clinics, hospitals, and community settings. Depending on the state law, some NPs have independent practice; some states may require a collaborative practice agreement with a physician, though the NP may not practice in the same location as the physician.

Is NP care good?

The care that NPs provide is very good according to numerous government and private studies. In fact, back in 1981 the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment¹ said, "*Nurse Practitioners provide care whose quality is equivalent to that of care provided by physicians*". An 2000 [article](#) in JAMA² (Journal of American Medical Association) also affirmed the quality of care of Nurse Practitioners, stating in the conclusion "*In an ambulatory care situation in which patients were randomly assigned to either nurse practitioners or physicians, and where nurse practitioners had the same authority, responsibilities, productivity and administrative requirements, and patient population as primary care physicians, patients' outcomes were comparable.*"



Why should I see a NP?

As noted above, NP's provide a high quality of care. One of the findings from several studies is that NP's spend more time with their patients. They listen and involve patients in decision making. If this sounds good to you, ask for a NP the next time you need care.

For more information about nurse practitioners, contact ACNP at (202) 659-2190 or email acnp@acnpweb.org

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