



What is a Nurse Practitioner?

NURSE PRACTITIONERS PROVIDE VITAL ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY HEALTH CARE

What is a Nurse Practitioner?

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are registered professional nurses who are prepared, through advanced graduate education and clinical training, to provide a wide range of health care services, including the diagnosis and management of common, as well as complex, medical conditions to individuals of all ages.

Nurse Practitioners have been providing quality care for patients since 1965. Today there are over 150,000 NPs nationwide practicing in a variety of settings, for example, employee health centers, universities, student health centers, school health clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, clinics, and private offices. Wherever health care may be given, nurse practitioners may be found.

Credentialing for Practice

- Licensure as a Registered Nurse
- Graduate education (Master's or Doctoral) with preparation in the NP role and at least one population specialty
- National Board certification in neonatal, pediatric, family, women's health, adult, geriatric, psychiatric or acute care

Practice

Nurse Practitioners provide comprehensive care within an area of specialization and can:

Evaluate an individual's health by taking a history, performing a physical examination and ordering and interpreting results from appropriate laboratory and diagnostic tests/procedures;

Diagnose health and medical conditions by reviewing all available health information, and applying advanced clinical decision making processes;

Manage health problems by developing an individualized plan of care, prescribing medications or treatments, obtaining consultations and referrals, and coordinating health care services;

Promote health by ordering screenings, prescribing preventive therapies (vaccinations, diets, exercise, etc.) and teaching and counseling of individuals, families, and groups;

Collaborate with patients and families, and other health care providers.

A NP can serve as a patient's primary health care provider and is able to provide the coordination and management of care required in various health care delivery models, such as medical home, accountable care organizations, transitional care, etc.

Regulation

Nurse Practitioners practice within the scope of their state's nurse practice act. They are legally authorized to provide comprehensive care management, including prescribing medications. In many states NPs own and practice in their own offices. Nurse practitioners may admit to hospitals and are on call to respond to urgent patient needs 24/7.

NPs may be reimbursed as primary care providers under Medicare, Medicaid and by many private insurers. They may also be empanelled by HMOs as a primary care provider. In some instances federal regulations limit a NP's ability to order essential care. For example, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services prohibit NPs from ordering home health care.

Quality of Care

Extensive research has been conducted to evaluate the quality and safety of care provided by nurse practitioners. These studies have demonstrated that the outcomes of care provided by NPs are comparable to and in some cases exceed those of physicians.

NPs: Part of the solution for health care in America

American College of Nurse Practitioners
1501 Wilson Blvd. Suite 509
Arlington, VA 22209
Phone: 703-740-2529 Fax: 703-740-2533
Email: acnp@acnpweb.org Web: www.acnpweb.org