Imagine a World
Without Registered Nurses

How Do Advanced Practice Registered Nurses* (APRNs) Differ?

Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) are qualified to furnish many of the same services traditionally provided by physicians:

- diagnosing illnesses through examination; health histories; ordering, performing and interpreting lab tests and x-rays; and
- determining treatment plans which may include prescribing medications.

APRNs are further identified by four categories:

- Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP)
- Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
- Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)

APRNs acquire specialized knowledge and skills acquired through graduate or post-graduate level education and certification for practice in a specific role and/or with a specific patient population. Certification can be provided by a state agency but is more often provided by a national body such as the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) or relevant specialty nurses association.

Decades of research has shown that APRNs provide care that is as high in quality and patient satisfaction as that provided by physicians. As of 2008, an estimated 251,000 RNs report they are prepared as an APRN in one or more specialties or fields; an increase of just over 4% since 2004.

Each year Americans are unable to acquire timely health-care services either because of an inability to access physician care or because the provider no longer accepts the patients’ insurance coverage. (such as Medicare). APRNs play a critical role in fulfilling this unmet need.

How Do LPNS Differ from RNs?

Licensed practical nurses (LPNs), also known as licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) in California and Texas, complement the healthcare team by providing basic, routine care consistent with their education under the direction of an RN, APRN, MD/DO in a variety of settings. The scope of practice as with the education is less in depth than that for the RN. Many continue their education in order to qualify for RN licensure.
Who Registered Nurses Are
They are the largest segment of the healthcare workforce with 3.1 million. Nearly every healthcare encounter includes a Registered Nurse (RN). From the staff nurse in the community hospital, the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) working in a local retail clinic, or the school nurse in your child’s school, RNs are meeting America’s many healthcare needs.

The average age for all licensed nurses was 47 years with nearly 48%, 50 and older (2008).

Where Registered Nurses Work
Of the 2.7 million RNs employed in nursing

What Registered Nurses Do
They...
- Perform physical exams and health histories.
- Provide health promotion, counseling and education.
- Administer medications, wound care, and numerous other personalized interventions.

Less visible, they...
- Interpret patient information and make critical decisions about needed actions.
- Coordinate care, in collaboration with a wide array of healthcare professionals.

Direct and supervise care delivered by other healthcare personnel such as licensed practical nurses and nurse aides.
- Conduct research in support of improved practice and patient outcomes.

The average annual earnings for full time RNs (excluding managers, supervisors and faculty) was $69,110 (2011).

How Nurses Qualify
Licensure
Every state and the District of Columbia have a board of nursing with a mission of protecting the public from harm. The Board is responsible for:
- Establishing requirements for initial licensure and retention, including: basic education for entry and continuing education and/or competency.
- Interpreting scope of practice parameters.
- Investigating complaints against licensees and executing appropriate actions.

Basic Education
There is more than one educational pathway resulting in eligibility to take the standardized National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX)-RN and acquire a state license.

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BS/BSN) offered at colleges and universities:
- Prepares graduates to engage in the full scope of professional nursing practice across all healthcare settings.
- Is intended to result in a deeper understanding of the cultural, political, economic, and social issues that affect patients and influence healthcare delivery.
- Includes nursing theory, physical and behavioral sciences, and humanities with additional content in research, leadership, and may include such topics as healthcare economics, health informatics, and health policy.

Graduate / Post-Graduate Education
- Master’s Degree (MSN) programs offer a number of tracks designed to prepare Advanced Practice Registered Nurses*, nurse administrators, and nurse educators.
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs are research-focused. Graduates typically teach and/or conduct research.
- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs focus on clinical practice or leadership roles.

The Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) is offered by community colleges and many hospital-based-schools of nursing. Diplomas in Nursing which were once the most common route to RN licensure are only available through hospital-based schools of nursing and have been on the decline.