

Nurse Practitioners

A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse with additional education in health assessment, diagnosis and management of illnesses and injuries, including prescribing drugs. Nurse practitioners are authorized to refer to a physician, make and communicate a diagnosis, order laboratory or other diagnostic tests, prescribe medication and provide emergency care.

Nurse practitioners are recognized as having the potential to contribute significantly to primary health care delivery; however, within Canada educational requirements and titles used to describe nurse practitioner are inconsistent. The legislation, regulation and education of nurse practitioners are the responsibility of each individual province and territory and therefore vary across the country.

Generally, in Canada, there are two types of nurse practitioner, the primary health care nurse practitioner (PHCNP) and the acute care nurse practitioner (ACNP or sometimes called a Specialist NP). Presently, programs for PHCNPs are at the post RN, baccalaureate or graduate level. Acute care NPs have always been at the graduate level only. Both the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) are recommending graduate education to prepare nurses for the role of nurse practitioner. The Canadian Nurse Practitioner Initiative is aiming to increase standardization of nurse practitioner education by implementing the requirement of master's level training to become a nurse practitioner. With more provinces and territories requiring bachelor preparation for entry into the nursing profession, the requirement of a master's degree is becoming increasingly feasible.

For more information, visit the websites listed below:

Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador – www.arannl.nf.ca

Canadian Nurses Association - www.cna-nurses.ca

Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing - www.casn.ca

Canadian Nurse Practitioner Initiative – http://www.cna-nurses.ca/cna/practice/advanced/initiative/default_e.aspx