ABOUT NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have authority to practice independently and collaboratively in an expanded clinical role. The role was established in the United States in 1965, and in Australia in 2000. By June 2021, there were over 2250 nurse practitioners in Australia.

Nurse practitioner is a legally protected title with the role supported by legislation at both state and national level. Nurse practitioners have professional autonomy and are responsible and accountable for the care they provide for each episode of care. Nurse practitioners are required to hold professional indemnity insurance. They consult with their nursing peers, medical specialists, general practitioners and allied health professionals, to provide quality, holistic care to their patients. They work collaboratively to ensure patients’ care is integrated across the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare settings.

WHAT EDUCATION IS REQUIRED TO BE A NURSE PRACTITIONER?

To become endorsed as a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse must have no conditions on their practice. They must also demonstrate:

- Bachelor of Nursing (AQF Level 7: 3 years full time)
- Post-graduate experience in generalist and (if applicable) specialist areas (required for entry to post-graduate studies)
- Completion of post-graduate studies (AQF Level 8: 1 year full time) to gain entry to a Master’s program
- Three years’ full-time experience (5,000 hours) of advanced clinical nursing practice within 5 years of application to become a nurse practitioner
- Completion of a designated nurse practitioner Master’s program (AQF Level 9: 2 years full time) approved by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC)

An approved nurse practitioner Master’s program includes:

- Advanced clinical assessment and diagnostics
- Evidence based practice and research
- Pharmacology and prescribing
- Requesting and interpreting diagnostic tests
- Professional, legal and ethical behaviours
- Collaborating with medical and other health professionals

Nurse practitioners are the most senior and experienced clinical nurses in the healthcare workforce. They complete their Master’s degree as the capstone of a wide range of experience and clinical practice, together with an extensive educational foundation of at least 6 years of full-time equivalent study at University, and at least 8 years of clinical practice.
ONGOING EDUCATION AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Once endorsed as a nurse practitioner, education and continuing professional development (CPD) is expected and mandated. To maintain nurse practitioner endorsement, 30 hours of CPD must be completed annually, with 10 hours relating to prescribing, administration of medicines, diagnostics investigations, consultation and referral.

ACNP membership includes access to:
- On-line learning
- Webinars
- National Conference
- Professional Networking
- Working Groups, and;
- Collaboration with other clinical colleges.

MORE INFORMATION

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REFERENCES

i. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia 2020
ii. Nurse practitioners: A solution to accessible healthcare. Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP), 2017