

### **Introduction**

Sticky fingers, haphazard arts and crafts projects, and terrible flatulence jokes are all hallmarks of childhood and early adolescence. I've always loved being around children for the inevitable laughter and joy. However, childhood illness is also inevitable. From common colds to more serious ailments, I've always wanted to help take away the suffering of sick children in any way I can. Throughout my time in this course, I've realized that the best way to do this is to become a pediatric Nurse Practitioner.

I want to become a Nurse Practitioner over any other type of healthcare worker because they're able to build strong patient relationships. By understanding what the patients need and building up a level of trust, they are able to consider the patient's goals in life when helping set up treatment plans. Nurse Practitioners are also cost-effective healthcare providers because they can handle routine checkups and provide preventative care to reduce hospital visits, such as education on health and immunizations. They provide all-inclusive care to the public by assessing and treating illnesses and prescribing medication. I want to be able to reach as many children as I can, even those who may not be able to afford expensive hospital visits.

Nurse Practitioners also have a great work-life balance because they're able to manage their schedules. I could choose to only work four to five times a week, for example, where other healthcare workers might have to be available six days a week. Things like this have led to a high job satisfaction rate when compared to the other fields in nursing. Considering this, I think I would be very content in a position as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner.

### **About the Profession**

A Nurse Practitioner is a skilled healthcare provider who diagnoses, treats and manages patient health conditions. As a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, I'll be a care provider for children and adolescents until they grow old enough to transition to adult care. I'll collect and document their health information, such as their blood pressure, heart rate, BMI, and more.

Nurse Practitioners also evaluate and manage both sudden and long-term illnesses. As an expert in wellness promotion and preventing diseases, I'll handle tests, advise treatments, and educate patients. I'll also be able to diagnose patients with any medical conditions and prescribe any needed medications to them.

Work settings for Nurse Practitioners can vary. I could work in private practices, hospitals, and much more. If I opened my own practice, I could consult a physician as my supervisor and agree to treat patients under them. In a hospital, I would work in an interdisciplinary healthcare team to discuss the best treatment plan for my patients.

An interdisciplinary healthcare team is a group of diverse healthcare professionals, each bringing their own study of knowledge to the table to provide patient care. The team's main focus is to ensure the best possible health outcomes for the patient. This is achieved through the smooth exchange of information and a group understanding of the patient's medical needs. For example, in a hospital setting, a patient could see a physician, a nurse practitioner, a pharmacist, and a physical therapist as part of this team. The physician leads the team, making key decisions about the patient's treatment plan based on ability and degree.

As the nurse practitioner, I would provide direct patient care, monitor the patient's condition, administer medications, and act almost like a communicator between the patient and the rest of the team. The pharmacist ensures the safe use of medications and makes sure the proper dosage is given to each patient. The physical therapist helps the patient regain strength and mobility. They work to align therapy goals with the overall treatment plan. Each professional's role is distinct, yet they all work together, collaborating in our efforts to ensure the best patient outcomes.

I spoke to my aunt, who is a nurse practitioner herself.

"What was your experience in becoming an NP, and what advice would you give to someone trying to become one?" I asked her.

"From what I can remember from my experience becoming a Nurse practitioner, it was a lot of hard work and dedication. Undergraduate wasn't anything too crazy—typical, I'd say, for most majors. But there wasn't any room to slack off in nursing school; if you weren't meeting the testing requirements, they removed you from the program with no remorse. I was all about my books, though. I knew I had one end goal, and that was to become an NP. And no matter how hard it may seem, it always pays off in the end. Some advice I would give to someone trying to become one is to keep going. A lot of people who want to become NPs stop after they become RNs because they don't want to go back to school, so they settle so they can start a family or travel. But the secret is that you have to sacrifice a few years for a lifetime of happiness. I could start my own private practice, prescribe medicine, and travel the world if I wanted to. The luxury of being an NP is that they are always in demand. No matter where you go in the world, you are almost always guaranteed a job," she stated.

### **Requirements of the Profession**

In order to become a Nurse Practitioner, I must obtain a bachelor's degree in Nursing and a master's or a doctorate in Nursing Practice. First, I'll have to complete the major prerequisites in my undergraduate program. These include core classes such as biology, chemistry, calculus, and more. Then, I'll have to apply to and complete the nursing program to earn my bachelor's in Nursing or my BSN.

Next, I'll need to obtain a license to practice. This means I'll have to study for and pass the National Council Licensure Examination, or the NCLEX. This test will determine whether or not I can continue on as a nurse, regardless of whether I have my BSN. Once I pass, I can work as a Registered Nurse.

I plan on working as a Registered Nurse for about two years. At the same time, I hope to be enrolled in a master's degree program for my Nurse Practitioner license. I'll do my master's online so that I can work more flexible hours and prevent early burnout. The time I spend working as a Registered Nurse will also give me hands-on experience for my prospective career.

Once I finish my master's program, I'll have to pass the board exam. There are two different board exams I can take to become a Nurse Practitioner. I can choose between the American

Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) exam and the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) exam. I will take the ANCC exam because the pass rate for this exam is higher than that of the AANP. Once I pass, I will be fully certified as a Nurse Practitioner and given the licensure title of NP. All Florida-licensed NPs are now in a 24-month renewal cycle to ensure accurate care is being provided to those in need, so I'll need to complete continued technical education to keep my license.

### **Continued Learning**

Continuing education varies based on the state, but for the state of Florida, it is required that Nurse Practitioners complete at least 24 hours of continuing education units every license renewal period. For my first time renewing my Florida nursing license, I'll have to complete at least one hour of continuing education on HIV/AIDs.

Potential professional organizations and learning resources I can use as a Nurse Practitioner are the AANP and Medscape. I can use these to expand my networking opportunities, continue my education, and keep up to date with industry news. I can discuss any questions or concerns I may have about my practice with more experienced Nurse Practitioners. They can further educate me on patient care and provide tips on how to make sure I'm actively growing my medical knowledge.

The transition from Registered Nurse to Nurse Practitioner involves advanced education, broader responsibilities, and more experience in patient care. You have to have experience as a Registered Nurse for a minimum of about 2 years prior to becoming a Nurse Practitioner. In this way, becoming a Nurse Practitioner is a type of continued education for nurses to expand on their current knowledge. They get to work under less direct supervision from a physician. For me, this means I can have more independence and make decisions that I think will better patient treatment outcomes without needing to get approval first.

Being a Nurse Practitioner requires that I am always researching new information. With the rate at which new drugs and treatments are coming out, I will have to continue studying long after graduation. A career as a Nurse Practitioner means making learning a lifelong pursuit. Continuing education, while it is required, will make me a better Nurse Practitioner overall. As such, I plan on conducting my own research outside the scope of my mandatory educational units to get ahead in my field.

### **Conclusion**

I am just starting my career path as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, and I'm very excited to see where this journey will take me. I feel that this job is a great fit for me, perfectly balancing my desire to help treat as many sick children as I can and a satisfying work-life blend.

To begin my specific career plan, I will start by applying to USF's Upper- division nursing program in my sophomore year. I hope to start applying to lower-level part-time jobs to gain more experience in my junior year of college. As I enter my senior year, I'll begin researching and applying for master's degree programs to become a Nurse Practitioner. Once I graduate with my BSN and pass the licensing exam, I'll work in higher-level part-time jobs for more exposure until I earn my master's and get licensed as a Nurse Practitioner.

## References

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