

Career Watch

2019 Annual Guide

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Cutting-edge specialties

Résumé makeover • The case for certification
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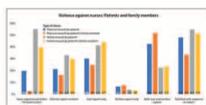
The CDC estimated that nearly 350,000 *C. diff* infections occurred outside of hospitals in 2011. Read more: bit.ly/2AvKVi5

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Welcome!

We hope this guide helps you on your journey to your career dreams. That might mean changing jobs or specialties, or simply adding to your skills through certification (see page 60). You can take a page from the nursing process to map your journey—assess, diagnose, plan, implement, and evaluate.

Assess

Where do you want to go in your career? These questions might help with self-reflection.

- What career conditions or activities must I have to feel fulfilled, happy, and challenged?
- What are my current skills? (If you're having difficulty identifying your skills, ask colleagues for help.)
- What obstacles are standing in the way of what I want and can they be eliminated?

Decide if you need to change jobs, change specialties (see page 55), enhance your skills, or some combination or other option. For example, explore cutting-edge career options such as population health and healthcare simulation (see page 49). Or delve more deeply into exciting opportunities such as travel nursing (see page 72) and nurse coaching (see page 76).

Diagnose

Plan

Decide on next steps, such as updating your resume (see page 68), or your goals are likely to be pushed aside by the demands of daily life. If you've decided that becoming a nurse practitioner is for you, use the algorithm on page 64 to align your education with your chosen patient focus.

Put your plan into action. To avoid losing momentum, ask a colleague, friend, or relative to hold you accountable to your due dates. If you're at the stage where you're evaluating potential employers, see page 66.

Implement

Evaluate

Check in with yourself frequently. Are you moving forward with your plan? Do you need to make adjustments? Evaluate your career status annually.

Nursing specialties on the cutting edge

Take your career into the future.

By Catherine Spader, RN

Have you ever thought about becoming a population health expert? What about a healthcare simulation educator or a research nurse? The rapidly changing healthcare milieu is creating and expanding many career choices in these cutting-edge nursing specialties. Other hot areas include post-acute care, health coaching, and nurse practitioner (NP) services.

Population health: A sweet spot for nursing

Population health is most simply defined as the health outcomes of a group of people, including how those outcomes are distributed within the group. As the healthcare delivery system evolves, improving the health of populations will become increasingly important, and the demand for nurses skilled in this area will grow, according to Susan Swider, PhD, PHNA-BC, FAAN, director of the DNP programs in advanced public health nursing and transformative leadership: Population health, and professor in the department of community, systems and mental health nursing at the College of Nursing at Rush University in Chicago.

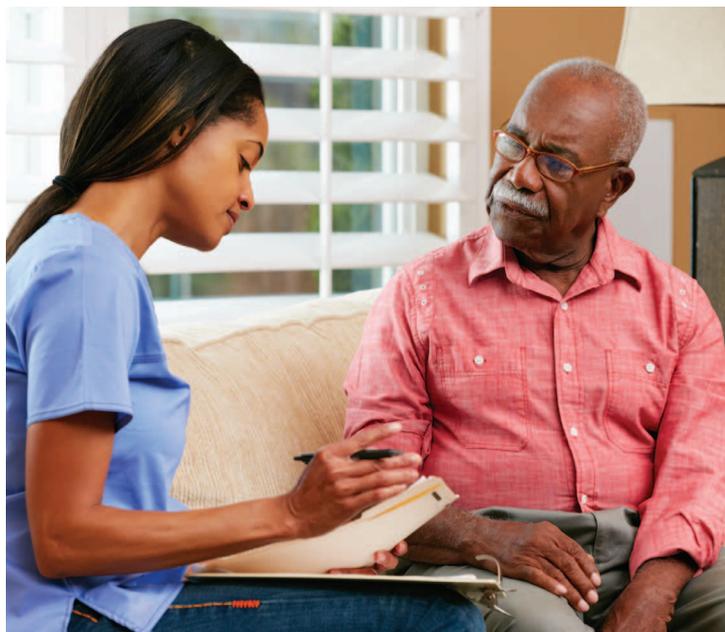
“About 60% to 80% of the factors that cause health or illness are outside of the clinical setting,” Swider says. “If we want to move the needle toward improving health, the system has to recognize and address those factors.”

Addressing population health also is critical to the bottom line in an era of value-based payments, where reimbursement is increasingly based on patient outcomes.

“Health systems now have to do more than provide good clinical care; they have to address all the factors that af-



Susan Swider



fect patient health,” Swider says. “This fits with nursing’s sweet spot because we are taught to holistically assess patients’ family, home, and community.”

What are the opportunities?

Nurses with population health expertise are in demand in many roles and settings including the following:

- **Ambulatory care.** Nurses with population health knowledge and skills are front and center in evolving models of care that help patients manage their own health. This includes performing health screenings and helping patients understand and improve prevention. Population health nurses also help patients manage

medications and other treatments within the context of their abilities, resources, and environment.

- **Care coordination and transition management.** Nurses with population health expertise are highly desired in this specialty. They ensure a smooth transition of care for individuals and families during and after discharge from the acute-care setting and into long-term care, ambulatory care, home care, and hospice. It includes ensuring safety and as much support as needed to maintain health within a patient's environment.
- **Large healthcare systems.** Large healthcare organizations are looking for more population health nurses. Opportunities include leading interprofessional teams. Some systems are adding or growing a department of population health, and many are looking at their patient population health needs both in and out of the clinical setting. This opens up many roles in which nurses work with community outreach to address issues that impact the health of a community.

What are the key skills?

Nurses interested in expanding their knowledge or transitioning into a population health career should have or develop these key skills:

- a basic understanding of data and epidemiology
- ability to work with and coordinate a healthcare team
- experience in community health outside the hospital
- expertise in screening for and addressing social determinants that impact health
- motivational interviewing and patient engagement skills.

What education is needed?

Swider recommends a minimum of a bachelor's degree in nursing. To be a leader in the specialty, a master's or doctorate is needed. Certification in public health, which is interrelated to population health, also is available:

- American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Advanced Public Health Nurse Certification (PHNA-BC): [nursingworld.org/our-certifications/advanced-public-health-nurse](https://www.nursingworld.org/our-certifications/advanced-public-health-nurse). (Note: Currently this is only available for renewal.)
- National Board of Public Health Examiners Certification in Public Health (CPH): [nbphe.org](https://www.nbphe.org)
University programs that offer advanced degrees in population health or public health include:
 - Johns Hopkins School of Nursing MSN Public Health Nursing Track: nursing.jhu.edu/academics/programs/masters/public-health/index.html
 - Rush University Transformative Leadership: Population Health Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP): rushu.rush.edu/college-nursing/programs-admissions/transformative-leadership-population-health
 - University of San Francisco Population Health Leadership Doctor of Nursing Practice: bit.ly/2R3uC3o

Learn more about population health

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN): aacnnursing.org/Population-Health-Nursing/About-Population-Health-Nursing
- Association of Public Health Nurses: ph-nurse.org
- Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science (IAPHS) and the IAPHS Conference: iaphs.org

Addressing unmet medical needs in clinical research

Clinical research is a big, fascinating field that offers many career possibilities for nurses, according to Bonnie Miller, MS, RN, clinical research consultant, faculty, and past president of the Northern California Chapter of the Association of Clinical Research Professionals.

"Any drug or medical device we use has gone through years of clinical research," Miller says. "It's all about addressing unmet medical needs."

What are the opportunities?

Employers include biotech, pharmaceutical, device, and diagnostic companies, as well as contract research organizations and med-



Bonnie Miller

ical centers, Miller says. “The field values nurses because we have clinical expertise and experience working with patients and families,” she notes. “Nurses are well respected and have a lot of career mobility and opportunity.”

A variety of roles are available to nurses in clinical research, from patient advocacy and teaching to technical writing of protocols and reports for regulatory agencies. Roles that are high in demand include:

- **Clinical research associate (CRA).** The CRA is responsible for monitoring the progress of a clinical trial at the site level. A CRA must ensure that the trial is conducted, recorded, and reported according to protocol and regulatory requirements.
- **Clinical research coordinator (CRC).** The CRC works directly with study subjects at a clinical research site under the immediate direction of a principal investigator.
- **Project manager.** This person manages studies and programs.

What are the key skills?

Nurses have key skills needed in clinical research:

- clinical assessment and knowledge
- collaboration
- critical thinking
- attention to detail
- flexibility, adaptability
- documentation
- organizational
- teaching and mentoring.

What education is needed?

Currently, no specific degree requirements exist to enter the research field, and many nurses



learn on the job and seek out certification. However, a bachelor’s or advanced degree is recommended, and many universities offer clinical research degrees or certifications.

Certification in clinical research also is available through:

- Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP): acrpnet.org/certifications
- Society of Clinical Research Associates (SOCRA): socra.org/certification/certification-program-overview/introduction

Learn more about clinical research

- ACRP website and annual conference: acrpnet.org
- SOCRA website and annual conference: socra.org

Healthcare simulation—bridging the training gap

Healthcare simulation is a growing field that bridges the gap between the classroom and the “real” clinical world. Today’s simulations include life-like robots that can mimic almost every known human physical condition to help develop learner’s assessment skills. They also have life-like skin and organs on which to

practice procedures and interventions.

Demand for nurses to work in this specialty will continue to increase as the healthcare system addresses ongoing issues of quality and safety, according to KT Waxman, DNP, MBA, RN, CNL, CHSE, CENP, FSSH, FAAN, associate professor and director of the executive leadership DNP program at the University of San Francisco, director of the California Simula-



KT Waxman



tion Alliance, and 2018 president-elect of the Society for Simulation in Healthcare.

The ultimate goal is for all nurse learners, from students to seasoned nurses, to develop new skills and practice in a controlled environment where they're allowed to make mistakes on devices and manikins, rather than on humans. In addition, simulation offers the opportunity for team training.

"The number one reason for errors in healthcare is due to communication breakdown," Waxman says. "Simulation puts nurses, physicians, and other team members together in scenarios to learn to work together and communicate."

What are the opportunities?

Many opportunities exist for nurses in the healthcare simulation field.

"Nurses are often sought after to work in healthcare simulation because they're really good at leading interprofessional teams," says Waxman. "Nurses are a perfect fit."

Most hospitals, healthcare systems, and schools of nursing are using simulation as part of their educational programs, according to Waxman. In-demand positions include:

- **Healthcare simulation educator.** These nursing educators receive specialized training and certification to teach healthcare simulation in schools of nursing and within health systems.

- **Leadership roles.** This includes managers, directors, and coordinators of simulation centers and labs or educational programs that include simulation, such as nursing residency programs for new graduates.

What are the key skills?

If you think you need highly evolved tech skills to work in the healthcare simulation field, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

"Don't be turned off from this career if you're not tech savvy," says Waxman. "Nurses are needed to teach and facilitate learning, not to work the equipment."

You should, however, be someone who's willing to learn new technology.

What education is needed?

No specific degree is required to break into the healthcare simulation field, although certain positions, such as nurse educators and clinical nurse specialists, require advanced degrees.

Advanced degree programs that include an emphasis on healthcare simulation include

- Drexel University College of Medicine Master of Science in Medical and Healthcare Simulation: drexel.edu/medicine/academics/graduate-school/medical-and-healthcare-simulation
- University of Central Florida Master of Science in Nursing and Healthcare Simulation (online program): nursing.ucf.edu/admissions/graduate-programs/msn/nursing-and-healthcare-simulation/index
- University of San Francisco Healthcare DNP with an emphasis on simulation: usfca.edu/nursing/programs/graduate
Certification also is available. Programs include:
- Boise State University Simulation Graduate Certificate for Healthcare Professionals: hs.boisestate.edu/nursing/sgcp
- Society for Simulation in Healthcare Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator (CHSE) certification: ssih.org/certification/chse
- University of Central Florida Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (online program): nursing.ucf.edu/admissions/graduate-programs/graduate-certificates/healthcare-simulation/index

Learn more about healthcare simulation

- International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL): inacsl.org
- INACSL's annual conference: <https://www.inacsl.org/education/annual-conference/>

Post-acute care

Post-acute care is an umbrella specialty that covers care after discharge from acute care. It includes rehabilitation, sub-acute care, assisted care, home care, hospice, and long-term care.

What are the opportunities?

Exciting opportunities for nurses in post-acute care are continually growing and evolving, according to Judi Kulus, MSN, MAT, RN, NHA, RAC-MT, DNS-CT, vice president of curriculum development at the American Association of Directors of Nursing Services (AADNS).

Quality reporting, new regulations, and value-based payments require greater communication and collaboration between hospitals, long-term care facilities, home care, and other post-acute care providers. Post-acute care offers an unprecedented opportunity for nurses to improve collaboration across the continuum and shape quality outcomes. If you're up for a challenge, post-acute care is a great area to grow and develop a nursing career, and have a voice.

"The field is wide open for nurses to be challenged in their nursing skills and to be leaders," says Kulus. "Nurses help to lead the way for more evidence-based practice-based protocols and in using technology for delivering quality care."

Nurses can choose from a variety of subspecialties in clinical, quality, compliance, and reimbursement career tracts. And you'll find many ways to build a career in leadership. Here are some examples of in-demand subspecialties:

- adverse event investigator
- case manager
- compliance nurse
- director of nursing services
- infection control and prevention specialist
- liability mitigation nurse
- nursing informaticist
- quality assurance and performance improvement specialist
- reimbursement specialist
- risk manager
- safety specialist
- staff competency training nurse



Judi Kulus



What are the key skills?

Needed skills and experience varies depending on the specialty, but nurses interested in a career in post-acute care should have:

- a robust knowledge of and competency in all body systems
- an understanding of a variety of conditions that affect health throughout the lifespan, including mental health and chronic conditions
- an understanding of social and environmental factors that affect health.

What education is needed?

A bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) or advanced degree is not necessary to begin a career in post-acute care. Positions in entry-level hands-on care offer associate-degree nurses the opportunity to refine many basic skills that are required to grow into other advanced roles in post-acute care.

"Nurses with an associate's degree are very welcome and can come into the field and build their career from there," Kulus says. "In addition, many certifications don't require a BSN, but it's an advantage to finish an advanced degree eventually as you develop your career."

Learn more about post-acute care nursing

- The American Association of Directors of Nursing Services (AADNS) supports post-acute care nurses with education, resources, legislative representation, and a strong collaborative community. It also offers the Director of Nursing Services-Certified and QAPI Certified Professional certifications. aadns-ltc.org
- The Society for Post-Acute Care and Long-Term Care Medicine provides education and resources and sponsors an annual conference: paltc.org
- The Long Term Care Nurses Association (LTCNA) provides education and resources and sponsors an annual convention: ltcna.org

Nurse practitioners becoming a hot commodity

Job growth for NPs is predicted to increase 30% between 2016 and 2020, according to Keith Carlson, BSN, RN, NC-BC, a board-certified nursing coach and owner of Nurse Keith Coaching based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He says that NPs are in demand nationwide. A high concentration of jobs with generally high salaries exist in urban areas, large populous states, and states with large elderly populations, such as New York, California, Florida, and Texas.

“NPs are seen as a hot commodity right now, and many NPs are needed and moving in the direction of home health, community health, geriatric health, and primary care,” Carlson says.

Two factors are driving up the demand for NPs in these areas: the aging population and the Affordable Care Act.

“As the country ages, everyone’s aging, including the physician and nurse populations,” Carlson says. “A large number of baby boomer healthcare professionals are retiring at a rapid rate, and we haven’t seen the pinnacle of that yet. With that comes a need for a lot of geriatric care professionals, including primary care professionals.”

And more opportunities for NPs exist in outpatient care and ambulatory surgery centers.



Keith Carlson

“NPs are also in high demand in underserved and rural areas,” Carlson says.

Learn more about the NP role

- American Association of Nurse Practitioners: aanp.org
- Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association: gapna.org
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board: aanpcert.org/about

Health coaching: Helping people stay healthy

Nurse health coaches, who focus on prevention and health promotion, are in demand in many organizations, including insurance companies, according to Keith Carlson, BSN, RN, NC-BC, a board-certified nursing coach and owner of Nurse Keith Coaching, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

“Insurance companies are hiring nurses as telephonic case managers who provide health coaching and case management to help patients manage chronic conditions more effectively and stay out of the hospital,” Carlson says. “It’s a huge benefit to their bottom line.”

The opportunities for nurse health coaches are growing in other areas as well, including healthcare organizations and fitness centers. Some nurses take the entrepreneurial path and own their own health coaching consulting companies. Others work in the corporate sector where they help employees optimize their well-being to enhance the workplace, productivity, and employee satisfaction as well as reduce insurance costs.

“Registered nurses are natural coaches because we learn to coach patients, even though we don’t call it that—we call it patient education,” Carlson says.

Learn more about health coaching

- American Holistic Nurses Association provides education, conferences, and the Nurse Coach certification. ahna.org/Home/Resources/Nurse-Coaching
- See the article on page 76.

Catherine Spader is a medical and healthcare writer/editor in Littleton, Colorado.



How to choose or change your specialty



Tips for a smooth transition

By Catherine Spader, RN

Nursing offers endless opportunities to reinvent yourself and your career throughout your entire working life. Changing specialties—or deciding on a first specialty—is a big step, but with some forethought and a plan, you can make the best choice for success at any time during your career.

“Some of the great perks of nursing are opportunity and flexibility,” says Phyllis S. Quinlan, PhD, RN-BC, president and CEO of MFW Consultants based in Flushing, New York. “There are so many specialties and ways to practice nurs-

ing, but nurses should have a plan to mature their practices effectively from new graduates until well into their 60s.” Quinlan is a nurse entrepreneur and a personal and career coach specializing in the unique needs of nurses and other caregivers. She’s also the career coach for the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses and the author of several books, including *The Delicate Balance: A Mindful Approach for Professional and Family Caregivers*.

The process is all about transitioning into the future, not sudden and drastic changes. Here are some tips for travelling a smooth career path.

How to transition from nursing student to novice nurse

New graduate nurses commonly want to find positions on the day shift that pay a good salary right away, says Quinlan. However, she advises

new graduates to resist the temptation to jump at the first high-paying day job they find. “Look for an organization that will give you the best new graduate orientation—that’s priceless,” she says.

New graduates should look for organizations that offer a skilled and didactic orientation. The orientation should include clinical experiences under the guidance of a seasoned preceptor for 6 to 12 weeks. “There is no salary coming straight out of college that will compensate for the knowledge, wisdom, and experience that comes from choosing the best orientation. That’s what will help you transition competently from student to novice nurse,” Quinlan says. “If you resist the temptation to go for the highest salary for a year or two and focus on the best transition, it will set the right tone for your entire career.”

How to make the cut when transitioning between specialties

Seasoned nurses have some advantages when entering a new specialty. “Nursing expertise is the core competency of any practice,” Quinlan says. “The nursing process is the nursing process. Regardless of the specialty, you’re going to make assessments, and create, implement, and evaluate a nursing plan.” Transferable nursing expertise also includes knowing the principles of medication administration, observation, and communication skills, and the ability to create an empathetic and genuine relationship with patients and their families.

New graduates should look for organizations that offer a skilled and didactic orientation.

Despite this, seasoned nurses can face significant challenges learning the ropes in a new specialty. For example, a med-surg nurse transitioning into the emergency department (ED) will find that rapidly triaging a wide variety of patients is a new—and possibly startling—concept.

To successfully transfer nursing expertise to new skills, ask questions about orientation similar to those that new graduate nurses ask. “You want to know that you’ll receive sufficient training in critical responsibilities and get the support you need to develop the mindset to be successful,” Quinlan says.

What lights you up?

Nurses should consider their interests and personal preferences when choosing a new specialty or practice area. In other words, what gets you excited and lights you up?

Ask yourself if you thrive in hands-on patient care, or does using your nursing expertise outside of patient care interest you more?

- If you love direct patient care, consider these questions: Do you prefer short-term or long-term relationships with patients? Do you like a regular pace and routine with patients, such as in the office setting, or do you prefer a faster, less predictable pace, such as in urgent care? What age group do you prefer? Does a particular body system, such as the nervous or reproductive system, intrigue you?
- If you’re drawn to work outside of direct patient care, consider these questions: What area grabs your attention? Is it technology? Nursing informatics may be your ticket. Are you intrigued by investigating the potential of new devices and medications? Maybe research is for you. Do you love mentoring other nurses? Then teaching might be best for you. Do you have a passion for prevention and wellness? Health coaching could be your sweet spot.

Taking a mindful approach

Quinlan also recommends that nurses take a mindful approach to choosing or changing their specialties. This includes considering your ideal work-life balance, especially if you’ve worked in the hospital setting for a long time. For example, after working on-call for years, hospital perioperative nurses may find it appealing to move into ambulatory surgical settings, where they can have a more regular schedule and holidays off.

Also consider your natural mindset. “Much of what it takes to be successful in a particular specialty has to do with your temperament, flexibility, and attitude,” Quinlan says. “There’s a personality and temperament that fits each specialty.”

For example, if you’re detail oriented, precise, and thrive on organization, you might want to consider a critical-care specialty over the ED, which requires a different temperament. “Critical care is probably where you’ll thrive. The ED is organized chaos, and that may not work for you,” Quinlan says. “It’s not just about transitioning knowledge and skills; it’s transitioning from a point of temperament and personality. There is no such thing as ‘I couldn’t cut it’ in a particular specialty if you make a choice that best aligns with your knowledge, personal preferences, and mindset.”

Will your employer prepare you for success?

Before jumping into a new specialty, new graduates and seasoned nurses should ask specific questions about the orientation program. For example:

- How long will my orientation be?
- What kinds of support (case studies, online tutorials, classroom learning) do you provide for learning theoretical knowledge needed in this specialty?
- Does your orientation program offer competency-based clinical training with a designated, experienced preceptor?
- Does your orientation program include time on the shift I'll be working?
- How will you help me transition my mindset from new graduate to novice nurse or from one specialty to another?

Med-surg nursing: the classic gateway

Medical-surgical (med-surg) nursing is seen as the classic gateway into many other specialties. But this field is a specialty in its own right, although it does provide a sound foundation for other specialties that are narrower in focus. "Med-surg teaches you what it takes to be a nurse and develops fundamental skills to build upon in future specialties," Quinlan says. Today, many nurses are getting that same kind of broader experience in sub-acute care and rehabilitation settings as well.

Critical-care expertise is also a boon to nurses considering a change. Here are a few examples of careers that transition well from med-surg and critical-care.



Transition to the dialysis unit

Nurses with med-surg and critical-care backgrounds are an excellent fit for transitioning into dialysis care. Patients with renal failure are chronically ill and may have several co-

morbidities. Their care requires top-notch assessment and clinical skills.

But dialysis nurses also need to offer psychosocial support and treat the whole person, from medication, diet and hydration, to lifestyle needs and challenges. "There's a huge psychological component to being tethered to a machine several times a week," Quinlan says. "Dialysis nurses don't just perform a mechanical procedure; they must be able to treat the patient holistically."



Transition to the OR

Med-surg or critical-care nurses who've worked with postoperative patients are in a good position to transition into the perioperative department. Good fundamental skills they've developed that are key in the operating room (OR) include caring for ventilated patients, maintaining airways, wound care, and I.V. and blood product infusion.

"There's a lot more to the OR than counting instruments. You're not just an OR nurse, you're a perioperative specialist," Quinlan says. The specialty includes patient advocacy, collaborating with the entire OR and surgical team, and providing pre-, intra-, and postoperative nursing care.

"To work in the perioperative department, you have to be able to think on your feet. It requires stamina, and you have to be knowledgeable about specialty procedures," Quinlan says. "You also have to anticipate and be proactive about complications."

Transition to the ED

Most of the patients in the ED are fundamentally med-surg in nature. Serious emergent trauma and cardiac patients are generally a



small proportion of the ED population, unless you work in a Level One Trauma Unit, according to Quinlan.

“By and large, a nurse with med-surg experience can perform good assessments and the episodic care required for many ED patients,” she says. “The ability to manage the flow of the ED is more similar to that in med-surg than in critical care.”

On the other hand, critical-care nurses have the skills needed and a natural mindset for taking care of patients who have to wait in the ED until a bed becomes available in the critical care unit.



Self-discovery exercise: Is it time to make a career change?

Thinking about a specialty change mid-career? If so, how do you know if you should make such a big change? It's a big question, and one that needs to be answered before taking your first step in another specialty.

Finding the right answers is all about self-discovery, according to Craig Nathanson, PhD, educator, author, speaker, and coach for mid-life adults. In the following exercise, Nathanson breaks the “big question” down into small-

er, more digestible bites to help you analyze your feelings about your work. It also will foster personal and professional awareness to guide you in making the right choice.

Discover what work means to you

Questions to ponder:

- Does your work align with your abilities and deepest interests?
Your answer: _____
- Is your work simply a way to earn a living?
Your answer: _____
- Do you enjoy your work so much you could do it forever?
Your answer: _____
- Does your work only represent a small part of your life? Is it not that important?
Your answer: _____

Perspective from Nathanson:

“As we age, especially after 40, the answers to these questions become more important. When work doesn't involve activities that you enjoy, it becomes a sure recipe for a lackluster life. When work becomes just a way to earn a living and nothing more, that leads to an overall sense of loss in one's life. When work is simply a path to retirement, it can be the biggest waste of one's life. Much can and will get in the way on the path towards finally retiring. If your days off have become the only part of life that's enjoyable, then a new recipe for life and work is mandatory.



Craig Nathanson

“Of course, you have to work to earn a living, but there are many ways to earn a living doing something that brings you purpose, satisfaction, and joy. Discovering the career path that will take you there takes self-insight and reflection.”

Discover how work affects your well-being

Questions to ponder:

- Are you looking forward to working today?
Your answer: _____
- Do you feel joyful when you think about work, or are you always negative about your work?

Your answer: _____

- Does your work cause you anxiety, stress, and worry leading to illness several days a month?

Your answer: _____

- Do you call in sick because of work-related anxiety, stress, and worry?

Your answer: _____

Perspective from Nathanson:

“Your work is the most important element in life because it can and will affect everything else, including your health, your mood, and your relationships. If thinking about your work makes you feel bad, then only you can change this.

“If in answering these questions you find you’re unhealthy because of your work, then you must make plans now to change what you do. Despite today’s situation, you can and must make a change.”

Discover how to align your life with a new specialty

Questions to ponder:

- What are your most important values?

Your answer: _____

- How do you know whether you’re following them?

Your answer: _____

- What goals do you have that align with what’s most important to you?

Your answer: _____

- How can you make your work align with these goals vs. trying to force your life to fit into work you don’t enjoy?

Your answer: _____

Perspective from Nathanson:

“It all starts with a dream. Think about the perfect specialty for you, your life, and your work. Does it involve making a radical change? If a radical change is too much for you at this time, investigate how you can make small changes. Smaller changes, like getting more education, joining a specialty professional organization, or going to a specialty conference, will add up over time and move you toward your dream at a comfortable pace.”

Final thoughts from Nathanson

“If you’ve been unhappy, frustrated, bored, or burned out at work, everything will change once you discover and transition into the right work. Your self-esteem will improve, and you’ll

feel happier and more joyful about your life. You’ll appreciate your loved ones more and have a greater sense of a life being lived in the moment vs. always planning for someday.

“When doing the right work, you can stop competing for the promotion, the manager’s attention, the next reward. The reward becomes the work itself.

“Most importantly, don’t settle for work that’s just a job—a means to an end. For this is the worst way to live one’s life. Step back; think deeply about what you want to get out of work. Start with small steps, and soon the momentum will shift in your favor.”

Show your enthusiasm! How to open the door to a dream specialty

Nothing opens career doors like visible enthusiasm coupled with education, according to Keith Carlson RN, BSN, NC-BC, a board-certified nursing coach and owner of Nurse Keith Coaching based in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

“The desire to learn more, to be more expert, to bring forward more knowledge and expertise demonstrates something important to potential employers,” Carlson says. “Education and certifications go a long way in terms of marketability.”

You can show your enthusiasm in many ways and hone your expertise in a new specialty. Carlson suggests:

- Begin the process to get certified in the specialty that interests you.
- Go to professional specialty conferences. Conferences are a great place to keep up on trends, research, and new information in a specialty. They’re also networking gold mines and a great way to find jobs.
- Read journal articles to stay current with the latest evidence-based findings in the specialty.
- Stay on top of changes in technology, including software platforms. If you lack skills, take courses or find a mentor who can help you learn.
- Use social media, especially LinkedIn, to grow your professional network and connect with employers and other nurses in your chosen specialty. Many positions are discovered through networking. ★



Keith Carlson

Catherine Spader is an author and healthcare writer based in Littleton, Colorado.

Making the case for nursing specialty certification

Promote the profession, advance your career, and improve patient care

By Barbara B. Blozen, EdD, MA, RN-BC, CNL



Why should you pursue nursing certification? The answer is multifaceted and ranges from personal satisfaction to improved patient care. Once you know why you should get certified in your specialty, you'll want to know how to do so. Here's a closer look at both "why" and "how."

Benefits of certification

Certification supports nursing professionalism, provides financial benefits, expands your job opportunities, recognizes your skills and expertise, and may boost your self-confidence and enhance patient care.

Professionalism

Specialty certification by a recognized nursing organization supports and validates the nursing profession and your own professionalism. You're already an autonomous professional; you have a nursing degree, use critical-thinking skills and the nursing process, and are accountable for your own actions. Certification validates that experience, elevates the profession, and confirms your commitment.

Financial benefits

Many organizations provide a financial reward or benefit for attaining nursing specialty certification. Some will pay for the exam, courses, or materials that you need to prepare for certification, and others provide onsite certification re-

view courses. According to a 2018 survey, nurses certified in their specialty earn 23% more on average than their noncertified coworkers.

Job opportunities

Nursing specialty certification can provide opportunities for advancement and differentiate you from others seeking the same position you are. Many organizations use nursing specialty certification as criteria for a clinical ladder program or for promotion. Others have policies that require certification for performing certain skills. In some facilities, for example, oncology nurses have to be certified before they can administer chemotherapeutic agents.

Recognition

Many organizations formally recognize nurses who attain specialty certification. They might hold annual certification breakfasts, include certification identification on nurses' name badges, distribute annual certification bonuses, present congratulatory certificates or memos from nursing administration, or announce newly achieved certifications in organization or department newsletters. One organization displayed a poster-sized photo of a nurse who earned certification, and another produced a video of a recently certified nurse to recognize the nurse and encourage others to seek certification.

Self-confidence boost

Some research has shown that certification may

boost your self-confidence and feelings of competency, which may decrease turnover, positively impact patient care, and increase patient satisfaction. Although more research is needed, in a literature review that was part of a 2017 article, Boyle noted that several studies have found that certification improves certain patient outcomes.

How to become certified

With more than 180 nursing specialty certifications to choose from, start with some self-reflection and research. What areas of nursing are you drawn to, what are your strengths and weaknesses, and where do you have the most experience?

Most certifying bodies require successful completion of an exam to obtain initial nursing certification, and then continuing education to renew the certification. (See *Tips to prepare for the certification exam*.) Are you ready to sit for such an exam or do you need more experience and education in your specialty of interest? The eligibility requirements for specific specialty certifications can help you decide.

Depending on the type of certification you're seeking, eligibility may include a certain number of years of practice in the specialty area and educational preparation (some certifying bodies require a minimum of a baccalaureate degree). You can learn more by visiting websites of organizations that provide certifications you're interested in. For example, requirements for certifications offered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center can be found at nursingworld.org/certification.

Take the next step

Certification not only benefits you, it also benefits the organization you work for. Your certification can help the organization differentiate itself from others and demonstrate that they have skilled and experienced nursing professionals. This is a win-win-win for the nurse, the patient, and the organization.

Pursuing and attaining a nursing specialty certification is a personal accomplishment and a professional success. It displays your commitment to nursing, can help you move forward in your career, and promotes nursing as a profession. When you determine that you're ready to pursue nursing specialty certification, don't hesitate to take the next step. ★

Barbara B. Blozen is an associate professor of nursing at New Jersey City University in Jersey City.

Tips to prepare for the certification exam

Taking a certification exam can be daunting, but these strategies can help reduce the stress.

- **Identify your support system.** This could include others interested in becoming certified (so that you can form a study group), and friends and family who could pick up extra chores to help free up time for you to prepare.
- **Rethink your priorities.** Move certification up on your list of priorities. Consider what you can let go of temporarily. For example, maybe you can opt out of participating in your monthly book group until after you've taken the exam.
- **Review what you'll be tested on to identify your strengths and weaknesses.** Most certifying bodies have a core curriculum that outlines what you're expected to know. Focus on your weaknesses rather than taking time to review information you're already confident in.
- **Establish a plan of study and commit to it.** Schedule a set amount of time each week in your calendar. If you feel you need extra help, consider hiring a tutor or taking a review course.
- **Take advantage of resources.** For example, the American Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses offers a book of sample questions. Consider splitting the costs among several nurses interested in becoming certified.
- **Review test-taking tips.** See "Use your critical thinking skills to ace your next exam" at americannursetoday.com/test-taking-tips.
- **Get a good night's sleep the day before the test.** You'll do better on the exam if you're well rested.

Keep in mind that nurses typically cite lack of time as a primary barrier to pursuing certification, but if you're committed, you can take steps to find the time.

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The consensus model: What current and future NPs need to know

Acute care vs. chronic care is the key.

By Caroline Lloyd Doherty, AGACNP-BC; Patricia Pawlow, ACNP-BC; Deborah Becker, PhD, ACNP-BC, CHSE, FAAN

As a current or future advanced practice nurse (APRN), you must understand the Consensus Model and its career implications to practice. The model was developed in 2008 by the APRN Consensus Work Group and the National

Council of State Boards of Nursing APRN Advisory Committee. It was endorsed by more than 40 nursing organizations, including the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties, American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, American College of Nurse-Midwives, and the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.

The Consensus Model addresses inconsistent standards in APRN education, regulation, and practice, which limited APRN mobility from one state to another. Through standardization of licensure, accreditation, certification, and education, the Consensus Model aims to improve access to APRN care. The model focuses on the four APRN roles: certified RN anesthetist (CRNA), certified nurse-midwife (CNM), clinical nurse specialist (CNS), and nurse practitioner (NP). It further specifies six population foci for APRN practice. (See *What's in the APRN Consensus Model?*) Licensure and scope of practice are defined at the level of role and population foci, with the adult gerontology and pediatric NP roles delineated as acute care and primary care based on competencies obtained through formal education.

In this article, we'll focus on the effect the Consensus Model has on working NPs and prospective students.

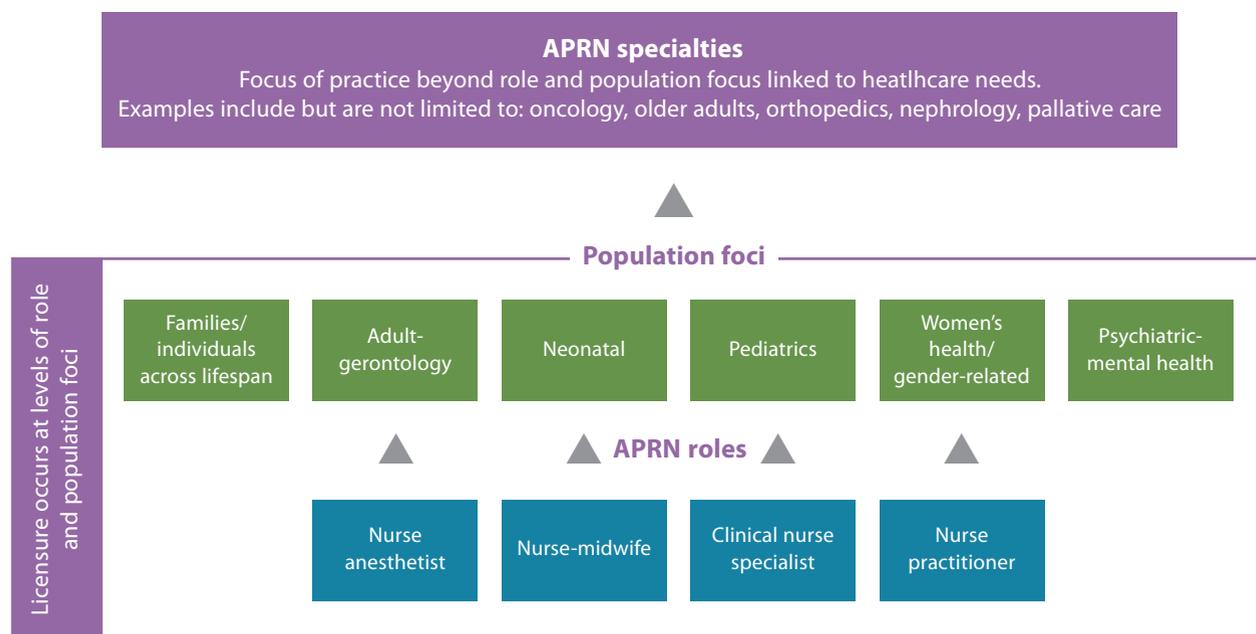
Consensus Model implications and challenges

Until the early 1990s, NP education programs focused only on primary care. As NPs began to work with acutely ill patients in areas such as surgery, acute care NP programs were developed. However, these programs were scarce, compelling nurses with an interest in acute care to enroll in primary care programs. With the adoption of the Consensus Model, NPs with primary care preparation must return for formal



What's in the APRN Consensus Model?

The Consensus Model standardizes licensure, accreditation, certification, and education and defines advanced practice RN (APRN) roles based on population foci. You can learn more about the model by reviewing the frequently asked questions page developed by the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (goo.gl/dupTdD).



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acute care education and obtain certification as a condition of state licensure and maintenance of ongoing employment in their acute care role. This requirement aligns their scope of practice with the patients, diseases, and treatments they manage. However, confusion remains among some nurses, employers, and educators.

Some prospective NP students report being counseled to make themselves more marketable by combining acute care nursing experience with family NP education. This strategy doesn't take into consideration the regulations that define and expand scope of practice by formal education only. NPs with primary care across-the-lifespan education aren't prepared to care for acutely ill patients.

The model also affects NPs who work in specialties such as endocrinology or palliative care, where they manage patients with both chronic and acute care needs. Remember, educational requirements are determined by patient acuity, not the healthcare setting. However, interpretation of the model in these situations is inconsistent and may have job implications. One solution is dual certification.

Employers also struggle with interpretation of the Consensus Model, mistakenly hiring NPs prepared in primary care for hospitalist or other

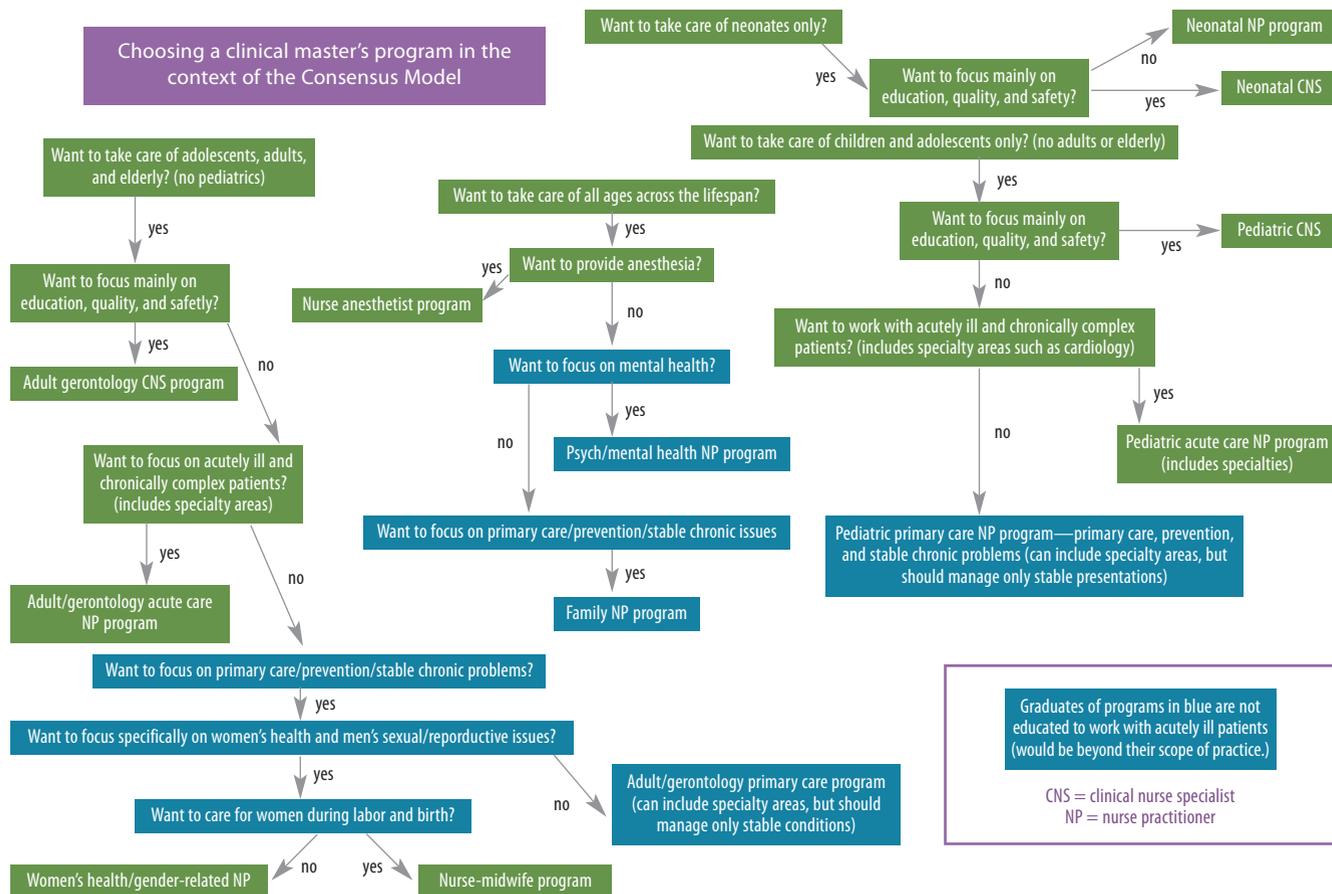
acute care positions. However, the only way for NPs to be properly prepared to manage acutely ill patients is to obtain formal education through completion of a dual master's (primary and acute care-focused) or post-master's program. Continuing education, fellowships, and on-the-job training aren't sufficient.

Some hospital systems require NPs to return to school to obtain a post-master's degree to meet Consensus Model requirements and as a condition of maintaining employment. The implications for NPs include time and expense; many post-master's programs require up to seven courses and over 600 clinical hours. To facilitate the process for experienced NPs committed to aligning their practice with the Consensus Model, some universities have developed condensed programs. However, to ensure access and to support working NPs, schools must develop additional streamlined programs.

Some of these challenges may be why the Consensus Model, which had an implementation goal of 2015, has not yet been adopted by all U.S. states and territories. However, because many states, employers, and hospital systems have adopted the model, prospective APRNs must carefully choose a graduate program.

Making choices

Use this algorithm to align your advanced practice RN (APRN) education with your chosen patient focus.



Choosing a program

To reduce the number of future NPs experiencing issues with their education and certification aligning with their scope of practice, we've developed an algorithm that illustrates a recommended process for choosing an APRN program. (See *Making choices*.) The first decision in the algorithm lets you determine the patient age range you'd like to manage. Next, you choose whether you want to be a CRNA, CNM, CNS, or NP. If you choose the NP route, you then decide whether you want to focus on acute care or chronic and preventive care.

Setting the standard

The Consensus Model has succeeded in setting standards for APRN preparation and practice. However, current challenges require communication among educators, employers, certifying bodies, and state boards of nursing about the model's implementation to ensure its goal of increasing access to APRN practice is achieved. ★

The authors teach at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing in Philadelphia. Caroline Lloyd Doherty is teaching faculty for the adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner program (AGACNP). Patricia Pawlow is the associate program director, and Deborah Becker is director of the AGACNP and adult gerontology clinical nurse specialist programs.

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Ready, set, get hired

Use the nursing process to find the job that's right for you.

By Mary E. Fortier, EdD, RN, CNL

You've graduated. You've passed the NCLEX-RN examination. You're an RN! Now, how do you begin your professional career? What qualities are you looking for in an employer? Have you researched your potential employers? What benefits—personal, professional, and financial—do they offer? Do they have opportunities for advancement? Do their mission and vision statements align with your beliefs? Do they have Magnet® Recognition? All of these questions, as

well as the qualities that set you above others looking to fill the same position, should guide your employment decision.

Where should you begin?

Many nurses say, "I need a job, any job." Don't give in to that refrain. You're a nurse—a member of the most trusted profession—and you're the reason patients recover successfully and learn new behaviors to improve their health outcomes and literacy. You're why institutions achieve Magnet Recognition, and you're a key member of the healthcare team. So start by remembering the nursing process.

- **Assessing.** Assess yourself and your potential employers.
- **Diagnosing.** Will these organizations provide an environment that promotes your professional growth?
- **Planning.** Do your research. Who is your potential employer? What qualities will you bring to the organization?
- **Implementing.** Update your résumé, submit applications, meet with recruiters, and follow up.
- **Evaluating.** Make evaluation a life-long process that takes into account new professional and personal goals and priorities.

Assessing

When assessing possible places of employment, consider the setting; is it a hospital, clinic, community organization, or school? If it's a hospital, is it a teaching institution or a small community-based facility? Has it achieved Magnet Recognition? (See *Benefits of Magnet Recognition*.)

What does the position require? Do you need an associate degree, a baccalaureate degree, prior experience, or specialty certifications? What's the salary? What benefits does the organization provide—health insurance, retirement plans (and what percentage is matched), paid vacation time, educational benefits (school and continuing education)? What opportunities for professional growth and career advancement do they offer?

Now for the challenging part: self-assessment. In an interview, you'll probably be asked what qualities you possess that set you apart from other applicants and how you see yourself as an asset to the organization. In preparing to answer these questions, consider your education, com-



munication and critical-thinking skills, and ability to be self-directed and handle challenges. Include an example of each quality in action. Also think about where you see yourself professionally in 5 years and 10 years. Will your potential employer provide the assistance and support to help you achieve those goals?

Diagnosing

Review your potential employer's mission and vision statements. How do they define patient care goals, community goals, and staff and healthcare provider involvement? Does the organizational chart support open communication, nursing education and advancement, improved patient outcomes, and healthy communities? Is the chief executive officer a nurse? How is the organization viewed by the community it serves and by the RNs and staff they employ?

Planning

Based on your diagnosis, weigh the benefits of all your potential employers and how they measure up. List the benefits each organization provides, including salary, health insurance, tuition support, paid vacation, and personal time. You'll also want to note the nurse turnover rate, how much voice employees have in the day-to-day and long-range projections of patient care, community interaction with the organization, overall work environment, and opportunities for professional growth and career advancement.

After you've completed the list, rate each potential employer based on your personal priorities. A side-by-side comparison of possible positions will show you how each provides what you're seeking. For example, if you want summers and school holidays off because of family commitments, a school nurse position may meet your goals. And although a hospital with Magnet Recognition is ideal, you must weigh that along with other factors. Is location important to you? Then maybe the local hospital is the right choice, even if it doesn't have Magnet Recognition.

Implementing

Begin implementing your plan by updating your résumé and submitting applications to the organizations you've selected as being the best professional and personal fits. Follow up on your applications and meet with nurse recruiters. After all interviews and meetings, write a thank-you note that acknowledges the time of those you met with and includes a sentence or two about how you align with their mission and values and that

Benefits of Magnet® Recognition

Hospitals that have achieved Magnet Recognition offer many benefits that may help nurses meet their professional goals.

- These organizations tend to have lower patient-to-nurse ratios, resulting in increased job satisfaction, and some may have a higher pay scale and funds designated for reinvestment in professional staff.
- These organizations typically provide nurses with more educational opportunities, direct involvement in strategic planning, engagement to identify patient and staff concerns, and evidence-based solutions to create safe work environments.
- Hospitals with Magnet Recognition are likely to have fewer safety-related injuries or incidents involving staff and patients, which means fewer back or lift-related injuries, accidental needlesticks, body-fluid exposures, patient falls, and patient-tissue injuries.

The bottom line is that organizations with Magnet Recognition offer opportunities for job satisfaction, career advancement, and professional growth, along with good patient outcomes and a safe work environment.

you're certain you'd be a valued member of their healthcare team and an asset to the organization.

Evaluating

Just as education is a life-long process, so is evaluating your professional and career plan. RNs are always learning, which may lead to different professional venues. So, keep evaluating. Will the organization provide you with the education, knowledge, and skills you'll need to reach your future goals?

An ongoing process

Taking the nursing process approach to your job search will help you prioritize your needs and goals and determine the right job and organization fit for you. And remember, professional growth requires ongoing assessment and evaluation to ensure that your career doesn't stagnate and that you continue to achieve new goals you set for yourself. ★

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Résumé makeover

Be sure your résumé makes an effective first impression.

By Krista A. White, PhD, RN, CCRN-K, CNE

Everyone wants to make a good first impression, and sometimes that requires a makeover. We often makeover our wardrobes for a job interview or first date. Think of your professional résumé as part of your wardrobe that makes a first impression on a potential employer. Whether you're applying for an entry-level position as a nurse, making a mid-career change to nursing, or pursuing a lateral or horizontal move, your résumé is a critical means to the end you seek. It's a concise one- or two-page snapshot of your life as a nurse that specifies the skills and experience you bring to a nursing position.

You also can make an impression with a

curriculum vitae (a comprehensive, multipage document that demonstrates your cumulative life as a nurse and beyond) or a portfolio (a print or electronic repository of professional documents, accomplishments, and examples of professional works). In this article, though, I'll focus on résumé makeover tips to increase your hiring potential.

Purpose and parts of the résumé

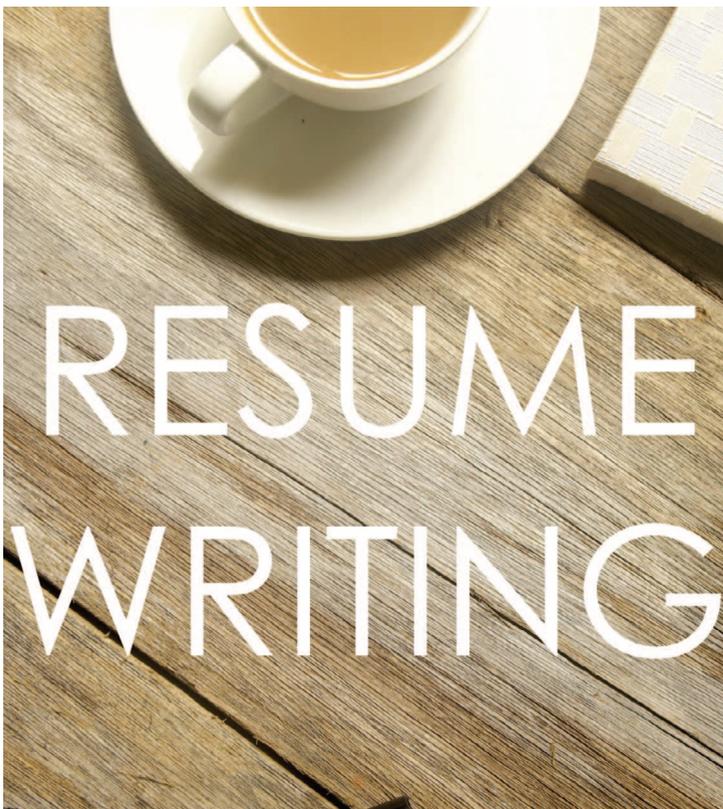
Nurse recruiters and human resources personnel sift through hundreds of résumés every year, so yours must stand out as extraordinary. It must make big statements in a small space. And it must entice a prospective employer to contact you for an interview.

Your résumé should include your name, credentials, contact information, education and employment history, and key skills for the prospective job. Education and employment history are typically noted in reverse chronological order (most recent first). Don't leave out non-nursing degrees; they speak to your diversity and breadth of knowledge. For example, the psychology or marketing degree you earned before your nursing degree may be beneficial to the position you seek. Include your nursing license number and expiration date to confirm that you're recognized in your state or territory as an RN. If you're an unlicensed new graduate, include the date you're scheduled to take the exam. Remember, organizations may hire graduate nurses for a nursing position only after successful completion of the licensing exam. Check with employers in your area about hiring practices.

Other information you may want to include on your résumé, if it's relevant for the job, are awards, committee activities, and educational workshops. Because a résumé is short and concise, it must indicate not only what you've done but also highlight why you'll be an asset to the organization. For instance, don't simply note that you led the task force on patient satisfaction, include that the task force improved satisfaction scores by an average of 2.6 points over the past 6 months.

Tailored for the job

Just as a wardrobe makeover requires tailoring, so does a professional résumé. (See *Résumé*



Résumé makeover: Before and after

You want your résumé to be concise, comprehensive, professional, and tailored to the specific position you're applying for. Before you start working on your résumé makeover, review the examples below.

Résumé component	Example: Original and makeover
Overview statement (be specific)	Original: Experienced nurse seeking management job in orthopedics Makeover: RN with 7 years' experience with total joint replacement patients and charge nurse expertise seeking opportunity as assistant manager to oversee collaborative quality care and improve outcomes
Name (include full name and credentials)	Original: Alex Romano* Makeover: Alexandria B. Romano, BSN, RN, ONC
Contact information (keep it professional)	Original: sexynurse789@yahoo.com Makeover: alex.b.romanoRN11@yahoo.com
Employment history (be specific)	Original: Staff nurse at rural Mercy Hospital Makeover: 2011 - 2018 Staff nurse, Mercy Hospital, Marietta, OK
Licensure and certification (include dates and numbers)	Original: RN and ONC Makeover: RN licensure in Oklahoma, #RN54923L9, exp. 10/31/2020; Orthopedic Nurse Certified #88632, exp. 6/30/2021
Clinical experience (use full sentences and be specific)	Original: Work on 5 Tower, with postop patients, complete mandatory annual clinical competencies Makeover: Organize and manage care, including discharge planning, for group of 4-5 post-op total joint replacements. Perform charge nurse role, address staff call outs to maintain adequate staffing, manage patient complaints, and precept new nurses on the unit.
Skills experience (provide examples)	Original: Perform various procedure skills specific to my patient population Makeover: Proficient with peripheral I.V. insertion and PICC line insertion under guided ultrasound, phlebotomy, bladder scanning. Expertise with cardiac telemetry monitor and rhythm interpretation and teach cardiac monitor classes for staff. Lead falls team that reduced falls by 80%.
Personal information (keep it professional and relevant)	Original: Parrothead (love Jimmy Buffet), political activist at the state-level, awesome skydiver Makeover: Volunteer at therapeutic riding center, organize and oversee cooking classes, board member of my local Rotary chapter (past president).
References	Original: Use neighbor or clergy or someone who knows you on a personal level. Makeover: Use professional references such as past manager, professor, or clinician preceptor you worked with. Note on résumé "References upon request" and be sure you have them handy.

*Names, numbers, and locations are fictitious.

makeover: Before and after.) It should be edited to match specific organizations and positions. Be cautious about sending identical résumés to multiple employers; a résumé that's too broad may go directly into the trash bin. Your résumé should highlight your accomplishments, note strategic career moves, and incorporate language used in the job posting.

Accomplishments

Focus on accomplishments, not duties. For example, rather than noting your membership on the quality improvement task force, instead specify an initiative you spearheaded and how that ini-

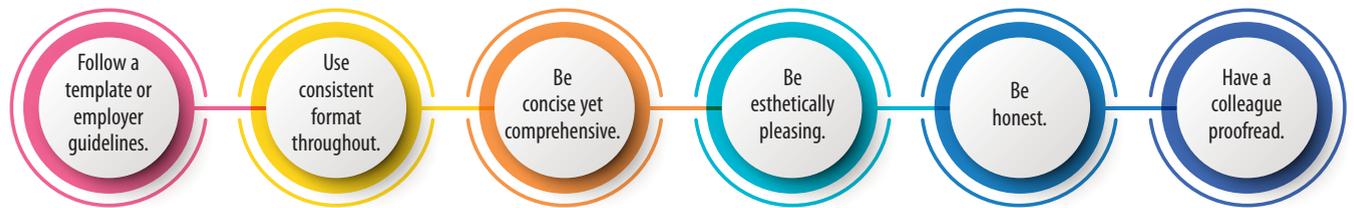
tiative improved patient outcomes or reduced costs. If the job you seek requires leadership and priority setting skills, highlight some examples on your résumé.

Strategic career moves

Tailoring your résumé necessitates the inclusion of strategic career moves. To stand out as a potential hire for an entry-level position in the emergency department (ED), showcase your participation in a summer student externship in the ED. If the job you want requires a master's degree in nursing, and you've nearly completed yours, don't simply indicate "in progress," instead

Pearls of wisdom

Let these pearls of wisdom from nurse recruiters and healthcare organization leaders guide you in your résumé makeover.



write “anticipated graduation December 2019.”

Obtaining certification in your specialty area is an excellent planned career move. (See related article on page 60.) It indicates knowledge and expertise and may give you the edge when competing against other qualified applicants. If special training is required for a job and you currently possess that training, note it. This notation shows that you already meet requirements (such as advanced cardiac life support, cardiac monitor interpretation, fetal monitoring). Nurses often submit résumés to change specialty areas, perhaps from clinical-to-clinical, clinical-to-administration, clinical-to-staff education, or administration-to-academic education. Tailor your résumé to demonstrate how skills learned in your current role will benefit the new role and the organization.

Key words

Using strategically placed key words (for example, teamwork, interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, outcomes, quality, patient satisfaction) is a great way to tailor your résumé. Organizations often use automated systems to track applicants for posted positions. Including key words that match key words in the job posting will improve your chances of continuing through the application process. For example, if the job posting summary includes words and phrases such as “experience with venipuncture,” “care of peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) lines,” and “patient education,” and you possess these skills, use similar language in your résumé.

Résumé challenges

You may encounter some challenges with your résumé makeover. Maybe you’re a new graduate or nursing is a second career, so you have little to no clinical experience. Perhaps you took time away from nursing to care for children, so you

have a gap in your résumé with no employment. Or maybe you’ve changed jobs several times in the past few years. Often you can spin these challenges to your advantage. Here are some suggestions.

CHALLENGE: No nursing experience

You’re seeking your first position as a nurse, so you have no actual nursing experience to highlight in your résumé.

Suggestions:

- Include relevant clinical experiences from your nursing program.
- Highlight skills—such as priority setting, management, customer service, and leadership—from non-nurse jobs that apply to an entry-level RN position.

CHALLENGE: Nursing as second career

You’ve had a full career in another field and are embarking on a second career in nursing, so you have limited experience.

Suggestions:

- Note similarities between the roles you held in your previous career and nursing.
- Highlight the strengths and skills you’ve developed; your diverse non-nursing and life experiences may be just what the prospective employer is looking for.

CHALLENGE: Returning to work after a long absence

You may have taken a hiatus from nursing to raise children, recover from an illness, care for aging parents, or pursue a higher educational degree.

Suggestions:

- Be honest and transparent and explain why you took time away from your career.

- Showcase what you've done to rejoin the workforce.
- Illustrate that you've completed a refresher course, attended conferences related to your specialty area, or completed online education related to pharmacological updates. This preparation validates your seriousness about reentering the nursing workforce.

CHALLENGE: Frequent job changes

Frequent job changes occur for a lot of different reasons—inability to find a good fit, a spouse or partner's career moves—but don't think your potential employer won't notice. Speak to it directly and honestly in your résumé and in any subsequent interviews.

Suggestions:

- Highlight the value that exposure to diverse types of organizations, work-flow processes, computer systems, and patient populations brings to the new position.
- A short résumé can't address the reasons behind multiple job changes, so phrase words strategically, yet honestly, to secure an interview. You'll want to cite your accomplishments, highlight important career moves, and use keywords from the job posting.
- During the interview, bring up the frequent job changes before the employer asks. For example, you might say, "You may have noticed that over the past 5 years I changed jobs 3 times. Let me tell you about that."
- If you left your job because of dissatisfaction, be direct and honest, but don't be derogatory about the previous employer. Indicate several takeaways from that position that have helped you become who you are.

Pearls of wisdom

Your résumé makeover won't be complete without some accessories, and several essentials are vital to the appearance, interest, and readability of your résumé. (See *Pearls of wisdom*.)

Follow directions

Follow the directions or guidelines set forth by the prospective employer. Nonconforming résumés may be the first to go into the trash bin.

Concision and esthetics

Strike a balance between being concise and com-

prehensive. And although simple is best, you also want your résumé to be esthetically pleasing. Use consistent fonts and styles, include white space between sections, and format your résumé so that it's easy to read.

Honesty is the best policy

Don't embellish your education or experience. Be honest and be prepared to provide evidence for all of the information in your résumé. Falsification can have long-term detrimental consequences for your career. Keep in mind that employers frequently complete background checks, peruse social media, and check references of potential hires. And don't take your digital identity lightly; be sure it places you in a positive, professional light.

Check and double check

Ask a colleague to proofread your résumé for grammar, spelling, and consistent formatting. Ask him or her to check it for organization, ease of reading, and active voice (action verbs). A high-quality résumé will move you forward in the hiring process; a cumbersome, poorly-written résumé won't.

Your time to shine

After your extraordinary résumé makeover makes a great impression and you get an interview, be at the top of your game. Arrive early so you don't appear rushed or flustered. Dress neatly and professionally, stand tall, look interviewers in the eye, smile, shake hands using a firm grip, and take your place at the table. Sit up straight and look confident. This is your time to shine. ★

Krista A. White is an assistant professor in the department of advanced nursing practice at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

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Embarking on a travel nurse career

Start by choosing a travel nursing company that meets your needs

By David Morrison, RN

If you've been a nurse for more than a minute, you've likely heard about travel nursing. You may have even worked with "travelers" (as they're frequently called) and wondered how they became travel nurses.

Travelers work temporary assignments that can last anywhere from a few weeks up to 6 months or more (13 weeks is the most common duration). These assignments often are obtained by working with a travel nurse company that specializes in temporary contract work throughout the United States. Quite simply, the process of becoming a travel nurse is as easy as picking up the phone and connecting with a travel nurse company. What isn't so simple is choosing which company to work with. This article offers tips for choosing the travel nursing company that's the best fit for you and explains how you should prepare for your first assignment.



Choose wisely

Online travel forums are the best places to start exploring the travel nursing scene. Some good sites include ultimatenurse.com, allnurses.com, and the Delphi Forums travel nurses and therapists forum (forums.delphiforums.com/travelnurses). Keep in mind that every travel company will have some negative reviews. You'll have to put in a little effort to understand the perspective of the reviewing travel nurse and whether he or she had a legitimate issue.

I usually caution against sites that allow you to submit your information to multiple travel companies. I've had many nurses email me over the years to report that after calls from a handful of companies, they're still left wondering which one to start with.

I also caution against online lists that say they compile the "top," "coolest," "best," or "most awesome" in the world travel nursing companies. If you do use one of these lists, find out what information was used to create it. Some lists rate companies based on the number of services they offer (for example, direct deposit, free continuing nursing education credits, malpractice insurance), giving each company "points" for specific services. However, I've seen great companies that don't offer all of the bells and whistles of larger companies score low on these lists. And I've seen companies I'd never travel with (because of numerous online complaints as well as word-of-mouth from actual travelers) score high based solely on the services they offer that not every nurse will require.

I've also seen lists that score a certain company rather high, and then right next to the list is a banner advertisement for that company. Can we say "conflict of interest?"

You also can find out if a company has a Better Business Bureau (BBB) rating. Not all companies are accredited by the BBB (most aren't), but it might have a rating and you can find out if anyone has ever filed a complaint against the company. If you have a major issue with a company (such as non-payment of hours worked, withheld stipend money, or unethical business practices), consider reporting them to the BBB. Even if they can't offer a resolution, this will record your complaint for others to see.

Narrowing the choice

Although it sounds a bit trite, no perfect company exists, only the company that's perfect for

Size matters

Both large and small travel nursing companies have their advantages and disadvantages.

- Generally speaking, large companies are represented in more markets than smaller companies and they provide access to more positions. However, you might get lost in the shuffle of thousands of other nurse travelers.
- Small companies, on the other hand, might offer more personalized service but not have assignments posted in the area you want to travel.
- The other option is a medium-sized company that offers a variety of assignments but doesn't employ thousands of travelers and still provides a personal touch.

To assess size and the amount of contact you'll have with your recruiter, ask these questions:

- How many travelers do you currently employ?
- Are you privately owned or part of a corporation?
- What's your current recruiter-to-nurse ratio?

Knowing the recruiter-to-nurse ratio will tell you how many other nurses your recruiter is assigned to assist. Smaller companies could have 20 to 30 nurses per recruiter, while larger companies might double that number with an average of 50 to 60 nurses assigned to each recruiter.

you. In other words, you first need to know your priorities. Everyone wants a company that pays well; however, no one facet of a travel contract exists in a vacuum. Most companies receive the same dollar amount for a travel assignment from a facility. The difference in companies is how they then allocate that money and pass it along to you. Some companies place more emphasis on pay rate, while others provide nicer housing or better healthcare coverage. So, knowing your priorities is the first step.

Here are a few other things to keep in mind while choosing a travel nursing company.

Referral

With over a hundred travel companies in the United States, choosing one may seem daunting. Your best bet may be to connect with another travel nurse to get a referral. Not only will the referral establish you with a company, but it also will pair you with one of the most important people in the success of your travel assignment—the recruiter.

Recruiter

Whatever company you choose, you'll want to work with a recruiter who answers your questions and listens to your assignment expectations. The recruiter should find an assignment

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If you know that you want to work in a particular state, it may be worthwhile to obtain your license before you start looking for a travel assignment.

that meets your needs or desires. Do you want to ski during your time off or lie on the beach? Or maybe you want to be close to your best friend from nursing school who moved to Los Angeles. Maybe you need to pay off some bills, so you only want assignments that pay a specific hourly rate (or higher). Or you might prefer a small rural hospital or a large university-affiliated teaching facility. Whatever your specific needs, your recruiter should be able to help find an assignment that meets them.

Size

Another consideration in choosing a travel company may be whether you prefer one that’s large or small. They both have advantages and disadvantages. (See *Size matters.*)

Multiple companies

Many nurses ask me if they should join multiple companies. I advise them to be “on file with,” which means establishing a relationship with a recruiter and completing the basic paperwork for at least a handful of companies (after 2 decades of travel, I’m still on file with six or seven). Then, if one company doesn’t have an assignment in the location you wish to travel, you can call two or three others and usually find what you want.

And all new travelers should be on file with multiple companies because some hospitals may specify “no first-time travelers.” The more companies you’re on file with, the more assignment opportunities you’ll have (not all companies have the same assignment selection).

Don’t be afraid to have several companies looking for you at once, but be respectful of your recruiters and let them know if you take an assignment with another company.

The first assignment

After joining a few companies and connecting with recruiters, start exploring your assignment options. And start thinking about obtaining a nursing license



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(or endorsement) in the state in which you'll be working. If you reside in a state that's part of the Nurse Compact Licensure, then it becomes a bit easier (visit ncsbn.org/nurse-licensure-compact.htm for more information and to see if your state is included).

For some states, obtaining a license or endorsement can be a lengthy process (California currently lists 10 to 12 weeks for license by endorsement). If you know that you want to work in a particular state, it may be worthwhile to obtain your license before you start looking for a travel assignment.

Preparation for a travel assignment is similar to starting any new job in nursing. Make sure you have all your important documents—nursing license, certifications (like basic life support/advance cardiac life support), and any documents specific to starting a nursing job (like a PPD test and immunizations).

Also be prepared to have your nursing skills and knowledge tested. Some travel assignments will require a written test in your specialty or a general medication/drug calculation test. You also may encounter formalized nursing scenario testing (the most common is the Performance-Based Development System). Ask your recruiter what testing you should anticipate from your new facility.

The physical preparation for a travel assignment is similar to preparing to go on vacation (if the vacation is for 13 weeks). Pack light, but try to anticipate the items you'll need when being away from home for an extended period.

Put some forethought into what your daily life will look like in your new location. Where will you grocery shop? Get your oil changed? Spend your free time? Go online to become familiar with your new location and the things you'll want to see and do while you're there.

Explore the possibilities

Travel nursing can be an exciting way to practice nursing, but explore the lifestyle first to determine whether it's your cup of tea. If you want to know more, you can email me at david@travelnursesbible.com for help in getting started in what, for me, has been an exciting and rewarding way to practice nursing.

David Morrison has been on the travel circuit since 1995. He is the author of *Travel Nurses Bible* and writes for a travel nurse blog (travelnursingblogs.com/author/david-morrison-r-n/).

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Nurse coaching: Facilitating a paradigm of health and wellness

Use coaching skills to enhance your practice and support patients.

By Rose Hosler RN, BSN, HNB-BC, HWNC-BC, and Anna Rhodes RN, MSN, CCRN-CSC, HNB-BC, HWNC-NC

Coaches work in a variety of fields, including business, health and wellness, fitness, and education. The International Coaching Federation estimates that in 2015, \$2.3 billion in global revenue was spent on coaching and there were 53,300 coach practitioners worldwide. Nurses on the frontlines of care can add coaching skills and expertise to enhance their practice, support patient-centered care, and facilitate their personal and professional growth and development. (See *Why nurses become coaches*.)

About nurse coaching

Here's how the American Holistic Nurses Association describes the role and potential clients of nurse coaches:

"Nurse coaches work with the whole person using principles and modalities that integrate body-mind-emotion-spirit-environment to promote health, wellness, and well-being while they facilitate their client's growth and healing. Nurse coaches are supportive and encouraging, building on the client's strengths rather than attempting to correct weaknesses, and providing guidance and resources to the client who is the expert on their own needs and choices. Examples of nurse coaching clients include:

- hospitals to improve nursing staff retention
- individuals to improve their overall health and well-being
- insurance companies to reduce the cost of disease management."

Regardless of the setting, nurse coaching can be applied and integrated across nursing specialties with patients, families, and colleagues. It can be incorporated within your existing practice or as a separate career path if you have an entrepreneurial spirit and want to work for yourself. For example, holistic nurses can offer coaching as a service within their practice, coaching clients within a health and wellness model. They also can contract with organizations, institutions, hospitals, businesses, or insurance companies that want to support health-related behavioral changes. In other words, nurse coaches can work anywhere people want to be supported in achieving health, wellness, and well-being.

Being a nurse coach: A personal story

Author Rose Hosler shares her nurse coaching experience.



During my 26 years of nursing, I'd become accustomed to teaching, leading, and being a resource for patients, families, staff and, of course, my own family and friends. I was quite comfortable leading, telling, and guiding others. Then I was introduced to coaching, and things shifted for me.

I'm a board-certified holistic nurse in an acute-care setting, and I thought that learning coaching skills would add to my practice. I completed a holistic coaching program that was a hybrid of in-person class time, on-line modules, coaching sessions, and a practicum, totaling 60 hours. And I spent additional hours practicing my coaching skills. I've incorporated what I learned and use it at the bedside for patients, families, and staff.

Nurse coaching is about co-creating the relationship between the nurse and client, setting a foundation and purposeful connection, walking with the client toward a specified goal, and helping the individual achieve results. Instead of leading clients and instructing them on what they need to do, you allow the process to unfold. The premise is that clients are their own experts. You support them and facilitate their own awareness through your presence, active listening, and asking intentionally powerful questions. You create the space for patients and clients to realize that their answers come from within; you're there to guide the process and be their partner.

When I first began coaching, giving up the role of expert (leading and providing answers) was difficult. However, the more I coached and incorporated listening, self-reflection, and powerful questions into my communications, I realized not providing all of the answers or identifying the treatment plan was quite refreshing. Fostering a coaching partnership with patients that allows them to be truly involved in their healing process supports goal setting, improves therapeutic communication, and ultimately improves outcomes.

Recently, a patient in his late 50s was referred to me for emotional support. He had been admitted to the hospital because of diabetes complications that he wasn't managing well. Our time together turned into a coaching session. He talked about how he wanted to change his life and take better care of himself. Before coaching I would have provided

education about a healthy diet and exercise. But because of my coaching skills, I asked him some pointed questions. I started by asking him what he valued? He said, "Being healthy enough to enjoy my relationship." Then I asked him what that looked like. He replied, "I have to start with my diet." I followed up by asking how he'd like to begin. He said, "I'm not going to have dessert with lunch, I'll pick a healthier option.... Yes, I can do that."

He was so proud of himself for picking his goal, which was doable and attainable. Once he's successfully met this goal, he'll choose how he wants to move forward. He had his own ah-ha moment, realizing he was loved and wanting to fully embrace his relationship and be healthy enough to enjoy it.

Obtaining my nurse coach board certification through the American Holistic Nursing Credentialing Corporation (ahncc.org) gives credibility and validity to my practice. Nurse coaching has added skills and knowledge to my nursing knowledge base, expertise, and practice. Seeing patients and clients from a holistic perspective—valuing their mind, body, and spirit and facilitating their growth and goals through coaching—enriches patient-centered care and has been invaluable to me personally and professionally.

Becoming a nurse coach

Several programs provide coaching education. Nationally recognized nurse coaching organizations include:

- Advancing Holistic Health: advancingholistichealth.com
- Huntington Meditation and Imagery Transpersonal Nurse Coaching: huntingtonmeditation.com/portfolio-posts/transpersonal-nurse-coaching
- International Nurse Coach Association integrative nurse coach certificate program: inursecoach.com/education/overview
- Transformative Nurse Coach certificate program: thenursecoaches.com/tncpp
- Wisdom of the Whole Coaching Academy: wisdomofthewhole.com

Other programs that aren't specific to nursing but are available to everyone include:

- Duke Integrative Health Coach Professional Training: dukeintegrativemedicine.org/professional-training/integrative-health-coach-professional-training
- Institute of Coaching: instituteofcoaching.org

Why nurses become coaches

In a recent National Institutes of Health study conducted by Ross and colleagues, 164 nurses certified through the American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation shared why they became coaches, including the following:

- They want to gain knowledge and skills to enhance their nursing practices.
- Coaching provides a “better way” to deliver nursing care that matches individual values, philosophies, and worldviews.
- It’s a natural extension of their nursing practice.
- They want to focus on wellness and holistic health versus illness and the medical model.
- It meets their personal needs (career change, starting a private practice, flexible hours, and improving their own self-care).
- They want to validate their practice through national certification.
- They want to empower others to achieve health and wellness.

Nurse coaches most commonly see patients with anxiety, stress, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and pain. Most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that becoming a nurse coach had several personal benefits, including improvement in their job satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and their own health and health-related behaviors.

Source: Ross et al 2018.

Resources

Tap into these resources as you investigate whether you’d like to pursue a career in nurse coaching.

- **Professional Nurse Coach Role: Core Essentials.** This document from the American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation provides information about nurse coaching theory and philosophy, ethics, the nurse coaching process, and more. bit.ly/2QMiEeb
- **The Art and Science of Nurse Coaching: The Provider’s Guide to Coaching Scope and Competencies.** This American Nurses Association publication includes strategies for creating structured coaching sessions, exploring client readiness for change, and more. bit.ly/2NsfvCB
- **Nurse Coaching: Integrative Approaches for Health and Healing.** In this comprehensive textbook by Dossey, Luck, and Schaub, the authors describe the theoretical and clinical relevance and practical application of an innovative, integrative, holistic, and integral nurse coaching model. amzn.to/2Np4a60
- **The Wisdom of the Whole: Coaching for Joy, Health, and Success.** The author, Linda Bark, PhD, RN, MCC, offers information that nurse coaches can use to help their clients make effective change. amzn.to/2xxgtsy

- International Coach Federation: coachfederation.org
- National Institute of Whole Health: niwh.org
- University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality & Healing health coaching: csh.umn.edu/program-areas-section/health-coaching/index.htm
- Wellcoaches School of Coaching: wellcoaches.school.com

After completing a nurse coaching program and other required application criteria, you can be nationally certified by the American Holistic Nurses Credentialing Corporation (AHNCC), which is the only nationally accredited credentialing organization for nurse coaches. The American Nurses Credentialing Center recognizes AHNCC credentials for organizations seeking or maintaining Magnet recognition. To learn more about national nurse coaching certification, email ahncc@flash.net or visit ahncc.org. Access the nurse coaching certification/application handbook at ahncc.org/certification/holistic-nurse-coach/.

Investigate the possibilities

Learning to coach gives nurses the opportunity to expand their skill set or to even embark on a new career. Investigate the possibilities to find out if nurse coaching is a good fit for you. (See *Resources*.) ★

Rose Hosler is a healing services coordinator at Cleveland Clinic Hillcrest Hospital in Mayfield Heights, Ohio. Anna Rhodes is a cardiovascular intensive care unit staff nurse at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City.

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Nursing salaries and benefits: How do you compare?

Here are some results from *American Nurse Today's* 2018 Nursing Trends and Salary Survey; 4,396 nurses from across the country responded.

Salary

Here's the breakdown in reported salary:

- < \$40k (**5.36%**)
- \$40-\$59k (**24.63%**)
- \$60-\$79k (**29.90%**)
- \$80-\$99k (**20.44%**)
- \$100-\$120k (**10.33%**)
- \$120+k (**8.72%**)

About **64%** of nurse respondents received raises in the last year, and **17%** received a raise 2 years ago.

Benefits

Benefits that **more than half** of nurses report receiving are paid time off (83.50%), health insurance (83.22%), retirement contributions (77.23%), dental insurance (76.43%), education funds including tuition reimbursement (55.24%), and disability insurance (50.66%).

More than half (53.93%) of nurses receive additional compensation for shift work.

Certification and education

Few (18.12%) nurse managers are certified in nursing leadership, while **37.66%** of nurse clinicians are certified in their specialty.

In all, **40.21%** of nurses have a BSN, and more than **a quarter** (25.23%) have an MSN. Only **7.62%** have a doctorate in nursing as their highest level of education.

About nurses

Almost 70% of nurses rated salary and patient care as their number one and two job satisfiers.

8 of 10 managers and clinicians who responded are satisfied with their current job and **9 of 10** are satisfied with their peer relationships.

85.25% of respondents said that if they had it to do over again, they'd choose nursing as a career.

Read more results at americannursetoday.com/?p=53915.