

Nurse Practitioner Certification: Roles, Competencies, and Practice Implications

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Nurse Practitioner (NP) roles vary based on patient populations, age and severity of patients for whom the NP is educationally prepared to serve. Certification ensures that NPs have met the standard of entry into practice, within each respected NP role. There are two main certification bodies for NPs, these are known as The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and AANPCB (American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board), with AANPCB being the certification body and American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) a membership association for NPs. Currently these are the following NP certification roles: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (PMHNP), Neonatal Nurse Practitioner (NNP), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP), Acute Care (PNP-AC), Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AG-ACNP), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner- Primary Care (PNP-PC), Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (AG-PCNP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Women's Health Nurse Practitioner (WHNP). These are the core certifications which NPs are required to have in most states, in order to obtain licensure. After completing a certification, various organizations offer specialty NP certifications, which NPs can obtain if they're choose to specialize in their certification domain. For example, AANPCB and ANCC offer the Emergency Nurse Practitioner (ENP) certification. This examination is a competency-based examination for certified FNP's.

NP education is determined based competency with each respected domain. One of the main practice domains that determine competency is knowledge, Integration, translation, and application of NP practice. These types of competencies are developed by The National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF). These competencies were inspired after the World Health Organization (WHO) published health services research titled, Competency Based Curriculum Development and Medical Education. Then various other professions began adopting a similar type of competency-based education, such as NONPF. Within each NP certification an NP can take both certifications from AANPCB and/or ANCC to demonstrate competency. For example, a FNP can take both the ANCC and AANPCB board certification and their title would be listed as follows: FNP-BC, FNP-C.

Having both NP and nursing certifications can be beneficial for practice. For example, I am certified in Vascular Access through the Association of Vascular Access. This certification determines competency of knowledge in vascular access. Al-

though the certification doesn't ensure ability to insert vascular devices, one must still demonstrate competency in practice and application of vascular device placement. Having this certification ensures and verifies comprehension of various vascular access devices. Having this skill offers the NP supplemental knowledge to provide the best care in vascular access for example and to be able to perform procedures if needed. For example, I perform central line placement and demonstrated competency in this procedure through my facility privileging board. By having an NP place the central line I can code for such procedures, which generates productivity for reimbursement as a healthcare provider. Certifications are essential for practice. For example, a FNP can order psychiatric meds however, they should always refer to a PMHNP. It is important to correlate your certification with the population you are working in, both age and discipline. ■



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