

The Role of the Cardiology Clinical Nurse Specialist

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CNS IS 1 OF THE 4 TYPES OF APRN



A clinical nurse specialist is 1 of the 4 types of advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs): clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and nurse anesthetists. CNSs in Oklahoma can diagnose, treat, and provide ongoing patient management focusing on specialty populations like oncology, neurology, endocrinology, pulmonary, critical care, emergency medicine, or cardiology.

What makes the CNS role unique and ideal for specialty practice?

CNSs are trained to provide care across the continuum, from wellness to critical care in their area of specialty. CNS education and practice are focused on providing direct patient care as an APRN, leading evidence-based practice, and transitioning evidence to the bedside by optimizing healthcare systems and supporting nurses.

The Cardiology CNS Role

It is within a cardiology CNS's scope and training to care for both critically ill patients in the hospital and to provide care for patients with chronic disease in an outpatient clinic. CNSs work in a variety of roles, including direct patient care as an APRN, or their primary role may be focused on organizational systems to develop protocols, policies, education, and quality improvement initiatives to support nurses and best practice. They are also well-suited for roles like stroke coordinator or leading a heart failure clinic.



Stacie Hanes with the Oklahoma Heart Hospital team after completion of a minimally invasive ventricular restoration system to treat heart failure with reduced ejection fraction as part of a clinical trial.

Meet 2 Cardiology CNSs!

Candace Becker, APRN, CNS-BC: Since nursing school, Candace knew cardiology was where she wanted to be. "The complexity of the cardiovascular system, the fast-paced environment, and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in patients' lives drew me in early and never let go." When Candace decided to advance in her nursing career, she knew she wanted to provide direct care to patients as an APRN while expanding on her ability to solve problems and educate. She remembers the CNS track aligned perfectly with her desire to remain deeply rooted in clinical practice.

Candace's CNS role today is in an outpatient cardiovascular clinic setting where she focuses on preventing cardiovascular readmissions by providing direct patient care. Her role includes nursing staff development and integration of organizational strategies to improve outcomes across healthcare systems. After 25 years as a CNS, she continues to find her role rewarding today.

Stacie Hanes, MSN, APRN-CNS, CCNS-AG: Stacie worked as an RN in the cardiovascular ICU before transitioning to cardiovascular research at the Oklahoma Heart Hospital Research Foundation. There she worked as a research nurse on a variety of physician-led studies including drug-eluting stents, abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) endografts, MI, and trans catheter mitral valve repair. In 2011, Stacie was part of the research and clinical team that started the Partner II trial, the first transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) study in Oklahoma. She played a critical role in the development of the first dedicated Heart Valve Clinic at the Oklahoma Heart Hospital and currently maintains oversight of this clinic. "As a CNS, I am uniquely qualified for this role. I work as a provider- managing patient care in the clinic and in the hospital. Both with physicians and independently. I do a lot of training at both the nurse and patient/family level— disease management, medications, procedure care, etc. AND I work at the systems level- making decisions/protocol decisions for the valve clinic/structural heart clinic."

The role of the CNS is versatile across specialties, settings, and systems. Nurses often find themselves pulled to one specialty or another; cardiology is just one example. The CNS role allows practice both in the hospital and outpatient settings, and is designed to impact systems, nurses, and patients. Would you like to learn more about the CNS role? Learn more at [NACNS.org](https://nacns.org) or send us an email at info@nacns.org!

References

APRN Consensus Work Group & the National Council of State Boards of Nursing APRN Advisory Group (2008). *Consensus model for APRN licensure, accreditation, certification and education*. [Consensus_Model_Report.pdf](https://nacns.org/consensus-model-report.pdf)

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