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T H E

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NURSING



Nurses work directly with patients to evaluate their current health and create meaningful records that physicians review while developing a diagnosis or treatment plan.

Nursing is the largest healthcare occupation in the United States. Nurses treat and care for the sick, injured, disabled, and convalescent in a variety of settings. They also work to promote healthy lifestyles and behaviors in their communities.

Nurses are commonly found in hospitals, clinics, physician's offices, nursing homes, specialized treatment centers, and private residences. Their duties vary widely, from giving alcohol rubs to bedridden patients to assisting surgeons during major operations.

Although state laws regulate what nurses can and cannot do, work settings usually dictate a nurse's duties.

Typically, nurses observe, assess, and record patient symptoms, reactions, and their day-to-day progress. They administer medications and assist physicians during treatments and exams. Nurses, who create and manage nursing care plans, also supervise nursing aides.

Registered nurses (RNs) are required to graduate from an approved nursing program and pass a national nursing license exam. Registered nursing programs range from a two-year associate's degree to a four- or five-year bachelor's degree. Later in their

careers, many registered nurses return to school to pursue advanced degrees, which will enable them to specialize or to work as administrators.

Licensed practical nurses (LPNs) must train for one year in a state-approved practical nursing program before taking a mandatory state licensing exam. Unlike RNs, LPNs typically work under the direction of physicians and registered nurses. Most of their duties involve routine bedside care. LPNs collect samples for testing, and they take and record body temperatures, blood pressure, and pulse and respiration rates. They give injections, apply bandages, give alcohol rubs and massages, and monitor catheters. They help patients bathe and dress and care for their emotional needs.

Registered nurses differ from LPNs in that their education is more extensive and theory-based, allowing them to make unsupervised professional judgments regarding the status of a patient's health. RNs also perform duties that LPNs cannot, such as starting intravenous fluids.

Overall, nurses' earnings are above average compared to many occupations, especially for advanced-practice nurses who have additional education or training.

Q&A

Q:

If I earn a two-year associate's degree (ADN) in nursing now, can I return to school later for my bachelor's degree (BSN)? What are the pros and cons of this education path?

A:

Many ADN and diploma-educated nurses later enter bachelor's programs to prepare for a broader scope of nursing practice. One benefit of pursuing this career route is that the ADN can often find a staff nurse position, then take advantage of tuition reimbursement programs to work toward a BSN. Individuals considering nursing should carefully consider enrolling in a BSN program because advancement opportunities usually are broader. In fact, some career paths are open only to nurses with

bachelor's or advanced degrees. A bachelor's degree is often necessary for administrative positions, and it is a prerequisite for admission to graduate nursing programs in research, consulting, teaching, or a clinical specialization.

Q:

What are some career advancement opportunities for nurses?

A:

Nurses can advance to assistant head nurse or head nurse management positions. From there, they can become the assistant director, director, and vice president. Increasingly, management-level nursing positions require a graduate degree in nursing or health services administration. They also require leadership, negotiation skills, and good judgment. Graduate programs preparing executive-level nurses usually last one to two years.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Nurses must be detail-oriented, good at math and science, and enjoy working with people. Caring for the ill can be stressful, so nurses should also be compassionate and emotionally strong.

WHERE/HOW TO GET TRAINING

Schooling

Practical nursing programs usually require a high school diploma for admission. After completing a state-approved practical nursing program, an LPN in the United States is required to pass a licensing examination. Practical nursing programs typically last one year and include classroom study and supervised patient care. Study areas include anatomy, physiology, medical-surgical nursing, pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatric nursing, administration of drugs, nutrition, and first aid. Clinical practice usually takes place in a hospital or clinic. LPN nursing programs can be found at vocational schools, community colleges, technical colleges, some high schools, hospitals, and universities. RNs must graduate from an approved nursing program (usually two to four years) and pass a national nursing

license exam. Nurses can be licensed in more than one state. All states require periodic license renewal, which may involve continuing education. RNs can earn an associate degree (ADN), bachelor of science degree (BSN), or nursing diploma. ADN programs are usually offered by community and technical colleges and take two to three years to complete. BSN programs take four or five years to complete at colleges and universities.

Financial Aid

Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for students. For most of this aid, prospective students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, available from high school guidance offices and post secondary financial aid offices. For more information on federal financial aid programs, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.



For information on federal student aid, call: (800) 4FEDAID

FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

With more than 2 million jobs, nursing is the nation's largest health care field. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Labor includes nursing as one

of the top 10 occupations projected to provide the most new jobs in the coming decade. Some regions of the country currently report nursing shortages.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Nurses traditionally work in hospitals, physician's offices, nursing homes, medical clinics, schools, community centers, and

private residences. Some nurses work with infectious diseases or with equipment utilizing harmful radioactive ways or gases.

RESOURCES - HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

BOOK:

Kaplan Careers In Nursing: Manage Your Future In The Changing World Of Healthcare
By Annette Vallano

ONLINE:

www.nursingworld.org
(american nurses association)

GENERAL:

National League For Nursing
61 Broadway New York, NY 10006
Web Site:www.nln.org

LOCAL:

Career Counselor
Ronai Krugh
752-8100 x242
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YOU HAVE THE POWER

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JOBS IN THIS FIELD

Job titles	Place of work	Kind of work	Average salary*
Registered nurse	Hospital, physician's office, clinic, nursing home, school	Cares for patients; supervises LPNs and nursing assistants.	\$30,000-\$60,000
Licensed practical nurse	Hospital, physician's office, clinic, nursing home, school, business, private residence	Cares for patients.	\$20,000-\$40,000

*Salaries vary depending on region and experience. Sources:Chronicle Guidance Publications and Occupational Outlook Handbook.