



NURSES, MOVING BEYOND THE BEDSIDE

There Are No Limits

By Anne Llewellyn, RN-BC, MS. BHSA, CCM, CRRN, Nurse Advocate

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Published by Blue Bayou Press, LLC

ISBN: 978-1-943889-05-1 (PDF)

ISBN: 978-1-943889-06-8 (Kindle)

ISBN: 978-1-943889-07-5 (Paperback)

Credits

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Nurses, Moving Beyond the Bedside: There Are No Limits

Welcome to *Nurses, Moving Beyond the Bedside: There Are No Limits*. My name is Anne Llewellyn. I am a nurse leader, case manager, nurse advocate, digital journalist, and educator with a broad array of experience in the healthcare industry.



I am often asked by nurses, “What can I do when I am ready to move beyond the bedside?” In this special report, I will highlight careers that nurses can consider as they advance in their careers and move beyond the bedside.

Nurses today have tremendous opportunities and career options. Your nursing education, bedside experience, and your own life experiences are the preparations that allow you to be successful as you move forward in your career.

Unfortunately, there is not a clear path for nurses to learn about the vast opportunities open to them. It is my hope that this report serves as that resource.

How to Use This Resource

This special report is comprised of over 30 specialty areas that nurses can move into after they have done their “basic training,” so to speak. I recommend you review each area of practice and consider which areas are of interest to you and meet your professional goals. Once you narrow down your choices, explore them further.

It is helpful to find people who work in the specialty area you are interested in. You can do this by visiting the websites of professional organizations

provided throughout this book. Research whether the organization has local or regional chapters or national conferences. Then, try to attend a networking event or conference to learn more about the practice.

Visit [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) to see job openings in your area of interest. You can also work with a recruiter who has expertise in the area and can help you find leads that may land you a job.

If you know of other specialty areas not included in this Special Report, to which nurses can move beyond the bedside, please email me at allewellyn48@gmail.com. We will add additional practice areas when we update the report.

It is my hope that this Special Report helps you find opportunities to meet your professional and personal goals as you move beyond the bedside.

Have fun exploring!

Anne Llewellyn, RN-BC, MS, BHSA, CCM, CRRN
Nurse Advocate

Beginning Your Nursing Career



When you graduate from nursing school, look for positions that allow you to put the theory you learned in school into practice. You may start out on a medical-surgical floor, or in a skilled care facility, rehabilitation center, home care agency, or another entry-level position.

As a new nurse interviewing for a position, remember to ask about the orientation program. A well-planned orientation program will ensure you are introduced to your role and have the supervision you need to be successful. Your first position will help you get comfortable as you transition from nursing school into full time nursing.

One thing is for sure: Working as a new nurse is an eye-opening experience. It sheds light on both the resilience of the people you are called to care for, and on the broad and complex healthcare system. Starting out as a nurse can be hard. Be patient, give yourself time, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

As an experienced nurse, you will often look back the cherished memories of your early career, so enjoy this time.

When, Where, and How Do Nurses Start Looking for New Positions?

Most nurses spend 3-4 years in introductory roles before starting to look beyond the bedside. Many nurses try to move up the ladder in their organization. They may seek a charge nurse position, move into a supervisory role, or take advantage of other leadership opportunities in their organization. Keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities. Do not be afraid to volunteer for projects and step out of your comfort zone. Doing so allows you to grow!

The key is to know when it is time to move, which is different for everyone. From time to time, evaluate your position, skills, and competencies. This will help you reflect on where you are, where you want to go, and what tools you need to be proficient.

Many will decide to return to school for additional training, to complete their bachelor's degree or work toward a master's degree. Today, based on the Future of Nursing Report (available at <https://campaignforaction.org/resource/future-nursing-iom-report/>), it is recommended nurses have a bachelor's degree for entry level employment. If you have not achieved your bachelor's in nursing, now is a good time to consider returning to school.

In addition to formal training, continuous learning is important to ensure that you are prepared to work in the changing world of healthcare. Take advantage of in-services your organization offers, and look for in-services through your professional organization in new areas that interest you.

Today, there is a wealth of information that you can take advantage of to learn and to grow in your career. Take time to read and learn about the trends impacting healthcare and nursing. Look for areas that interest you.

Many nurses look toward certification to demonstrate their expertise in general nursing. Certification validates your baseline experience. Many organizations working toward Magnet status encourage their nurses to

become certified as medical-surgical nurses, for example. The American Nurses Credentialing Center (<http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Certification>) offers credentialing in a variety of nursing specialties.

In addition, joining a professional organization such as the American Nurses Association (<http://nursingworld.org/>) can provide opportunities to network with other nurses. While networking you may learn about new opportunities in your field and what other organizations are doing during these changing times in healthcare.

You will discover your role in the healthcare industry over time. Again, be patient, give yourself time, and be alert for opportunities. Start by outlining your career goals and what you must do to meet those goals.

If you are reading this Special Report as a new nurse, I hope it provides ideas for opportunities that exist in the profession of nursing today. Know that nursing can be a stepping stone to a number of new and exciting opportunities. Enjoy your career!

Resources

Future of Nursing Report: Visit the website: <https://campaignforaction.org/resource/future-nursing-im-report>

American Nurses Association: Follow the link for Career & Credentialing at <http://nursingworld.org>

Accreditation Nurse



One of the ways an organization ensures consumer safety is through a national accreditation.

Several prominent accreditation bodies are highly visible in today's healthcare system.

If you work in a hospital, a skilled care facility, a rehabilitation hospital, or a home care agency, you are probably familiar with the Joint Commission and DNV/GL Healthcare. They are two of the leading accreditation bodies for those sectors.

Those in managed care have probably been part of an accreditation review by either URAC or the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). Those who work in a rehabilitation center have likely undergone a survey by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

These accrediting organizations all share a common goal: to promote quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process and continuous improvement services that center on enhancing the lives of persons served.

Accreditation organizations develop a set of standards through a consensus process with thought leaders in the practice. These standards address core processes needed for an organization to function safely, with a focus on quality and process improvement. Organizations use these standards to:

- Develop policies and procedures to educate employees to ensure compliance with the standards
- Develop a system-wide culture change that incorporates processes as part of their workflow
- Set a benchmark and processes by which all departments can work together to ensure the delivery of care is safe and effective

Nurses play an important role in the accreditation process. Many nurses lead accreditation departments, serve on quality committees, are part of the team that performs accreditation reviews, and can act as consultants to assist organizations preparing for an accreditation review.

For nurses who want to move into the area of accreditation, the following skills are among those needed to be effective:

- An assertive personality
- Project management skills
- Communication skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Creativity
- Ability to interpret information and place it in the organization's overall culture and structure
- Capacity to be a change agent
- Understanding of clinical, quality, and organization performance
- Ability to interpret data
- Leadership skills
- Ability to work under stress

- Crisis management skills
- Ability to bring teams together
- Quality processes
- Working knowledge of how the healthcare system works

Opportunities exist for nurses who want to move into this area. A staff nurse might break into this area by serving on the quality committee or internal quality improvement or accreditation committee. You can also volunteer to be part of the team to prepare your organization for an upcoming accreditation review. In addition, nurses with an entrepreneurial spirit can move into this area as consultants.

As healthcare becomes more transparent and reimbursement is tied to quality and outcomes, organizations will need strong processes to identify risk as well as system-wide quality improvement plans in place. Nurses who like this area of work can consider the specialty area of accreditation when they are ready to move beyond the bedside.

Resources

To learn more about the various accreditations and the focuses of each organization, visit the following websites:

Joint Commission: www.jointcommission.org

DNV/GL Healthcare: www.dnvgllhealthcare.com/accreditations/hospital-accreditation

URAC: www.urac.org

NCQA: <http://www.ncqa.org>

CARF International: www.carf.org/home

Magnet Recognition Program: <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Magnet/ProgramOverview>

Certified Professional in Health Care Quality: <http://nahq.org/certification/cphq-application>

Acute Care Case Management



Case management is an integral practice found in every sector of the healthcare system. As more than half of the total costs of healthcare services are spent by hospitals and physician practices, being able to identify at-risk patients is critical.

Acute care case managers work as members of the healthcare team to ensure care is coordinated, at-risk patients are identified, and a plan of care is developed to meet the individual needs of each patient. To validate their role, acute care case managers capture the outcomes they achieved as a result of their involvement.

Defining Case Management

According to the Case Management Society of America Standards of Practice, case management is defined as a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's and family's comprehensive health needs through communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes.

Nursing is the predominant professional discipline that makes up the practice of case management. Nurses have the clinical expertise and the ability to view the patient holistically. They also understand the complexities patients experience as they transition through the diverse and complex healthcare system.

Not every patient needs a case manager; most people move through the system smoothly on their own. A small segment of the population benefits from a case manager's service, however. Data shows that 20 percent of the population utilizes 80 percent of the healthcare resources. Case managers work with the 20 percent of patients who are at risk for complications due to social, physical, financial, and cognitive risk factors. Case managers, through a comprehensive assessment, identify challenges and break down barriers that impact the successful transition of care.

What Does the Acute Case Manager Do?

Case managers work with the population that needs help moving through the continuum of care. They work together with the healthcare team, the patient, and the family to ensure care is coordinated, identify challenges, resolve conflicts, and identify resources to meet the needs of the patient.

Today's acute care facilities are under intense scrutiny and are at risk for financial penalties for unnecessary admissions and readmissions. As a result, acute care case managers are being utilized to work with at-risk patients to educate, empower, and find resources to improve the delivery of care, thereby reducing unnecessary admissions.

Managing High-Risk Populations

Due to advances in technology, people are living longer with chronic conditions. It is estimated that 75 percent of healthcare costs are spent on those with chronic medical and behavioral health problems. With healthcare spending in the U.S. reaching \$3.5 trillion annually, there is an urgent

need to educate and empower patients and their caregivers to be active participants in their care.

Acute care case managers are positioned at the point of care to assist patients and caregivers by developing relationships. Building a relationship is key to establishing trust between all parties. Nurse case managers make rounds with the team to communicate information and ensure care is coordinated and decisions are made to help the patient progress safely through the care continuum.

Due to their clinical background and close relationship with the patient and family, case managers can address challenges and gaps that might otherwise derail the plan of care. The case manager works to educate the patient on their conditions and potential complications so they know when to seek care to avoid costly setbacks.

In addition, the acute case manager conducts follow-up calls after the patient leaves the acute care setting. The case manager ensures the patient is doing well and the care plan in place is meeting the needs of the patient. Proactive management by the acute care case manager is key to identifying problems early on so interventions can be put into place.

Due to fast turnovers, reduced resources, and diverse patients, hospital case managers must have excellent clinical skills and good communication and leadership skills to be effective.

Not every nurse is suited for case management. Those who do best are flexible, assertive, and can communicate effectively with the patient, their family, and all members of the healthcare team. Case managers effect change and work as a member of the team to ensure care is safe, evidence-based, and meets the needs of the patients.

If you work in a hospital and are interested in the field of case management, talk to case managers who work in your organization. In addition, a number of professional organizations hold meetings you may attend as a guest.

Doing so allows you to network and learn about opportunities in the field and decide if you would like to pursue this area of practice. Hospital case management can be the next step for nurses who want to move beyond the bedside but still want to work in the acute care setting.

Resources

To learn more about case management, read the Case Management Standards of Practice. These provide insight into the role, function, and performance measures all case managers are expected to meet. The Standards were developed by the Case Management Society of America. They are revised frequently to keep up to date with the changes taking place in the healthcare system.

Many organizations use the standards as a tool to develop their case management programs. To view the Standards and download the latest version free, go to <http://solutions.cmsa.org/acton/media/10442/standards-of-practice-for-case-management>

Case Management Society of America (CMSA): The organization for professionals involved in all aspects of Case Management. Learn more at www.cmsa.org

American Case Management Association (ACMA): A professional organization focused on the hospital case manager. Visit <https://www.acmaweb.org>

Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner



Today, an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) is viewed as a key professional able to diagnose and treat patients in a variety of settings. They fill the need for primary care providers throughout the United States.

The ARNP Scope of Practice

Advanced registered nurse practitioners, also known simply as nurse practitioners, can provide care to patients at any point along the life span. Nurse practitioners can work in adult and family care, pediatrics, and geriatrics. In addition, they can specialize in other areas depending on their training. Sub-specialty areas include surgery, orthopedics, and emergency medicine. Nurse practitioners provide high-quality care in a number of settings, including rural, urban, and suburban communities. They may practice in clinics, hospitals, emergency rooms, urgent care centers, private physician offices, in their own independent practices, nursing homes, schools, colleges, and public health departments.

NPs are able to prescribe medications, including controlled substances, in all 50 states. In 26 states, they have authority to practice independently.

Nurse practitioners are licensed in all states and practice under the rules and regulations of the state in which they are licensed.

Becoming an ARNP

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with graduate education in nursing. Among other core competencies, NPs should be critical thinkers. They must be able to glean relevant information about a person's health and life status from a comprehensive assessment, their clinical examinations, and diagnostic tests. In addition, they must use that data to independently make evidence-based decisions to diagnosis and treat patients.

Their educational programs include graduate courses in health sciences, such as pathophysiology, pharmacology, and epidemiology. They also take courses in the diagnosis and clinical management of health and illness. In addition, they complete several semesters of supervised clinical practice to demonstrate competency in providing healthcare. Graduates from these programs are eligible to sit for national board examinations to become certified.

Doctors and NPs

NPs must go through the same credentialing processes as physicians when they join a health system, a physician practice, or other healthcare setting. They are also subject to the same rules regarding quality standards, adhering to standards of practice, billing, and reimbursement rules that are part of their network contracts. NPs must carry malpractice insurance, as they are accountable for the care they provide, similar to physicians.

As a result of growth in the numbers of NPs, there has been a great deal of resistance from the physician community about the role, function, and competencies. Hence, there is a growing national movement to require all NPs to earn a Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) degree. It would be similar to the academic credentials earned by dentists (D.D.S.), physicians

(M.D./D.O.), clinical psychologists (Psy.D. or Ph.D.), clinical pharmacists (Pharm.D.), and other healthcare providers.

The number of primary care physicians coming out of training is decreasing, however. It is also important to move the healthcare system to a preventative model from the sick-system approach we have today. The specialty area of nurse practitioners is an emerging practice focused on delivering comprehensive care in a caring and cost-effective manner.

Nurses who want to explore programs for becoming an Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner have wonderful opportunities. Today there are a number of programs that are preparing nurses to move into this role as well as ways to finance the costs of continuing education.

Resources

American Association of College of Nursing: <http://www.aacnnursing.org>

American Nurses Credentialing Center: <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/certification.aspx>

Loans and Scholarships. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA): <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/loansscholarships>

Behavioral Health Case Management



The goal of a patient-centered healthcare system is to view a patient holistically and to address their physical and mental health needs together, as both are essential components to health.

As we know, many individuals who receive care for behavioral health conditions also have physical health conditions that require medical attention. The inverse is also true. Our physical and behavioral healthcare systems tend to operate independently, without coordination between the two. As a result, gaps in care can occur due to the delivery of inappropriate and ineffective care when a patient has behavioral health issues alone or in conjunction with a medical illness or injury.

Integrating Medical and Behavioral Health

As the healthcare system strives to improve the delivery of care and control associated costs, there is a renewed awareness that we must integrate medical and behavioral health in order to meet care needs for the whole person.

Integration of medical and behavioral health is being implemented slowly into primary care practice, as well as into emergency departments, clinics, schools, and other settings across the country.

Physicians, clinical nurses, social workers, pharmacists, psychologists, case managers, and other members of the care team are learning that to provide the right care, at the right time, in the least restrictive setting, they must assess a person's physical and mental health at every healthcare encounter. Those at risk will be identified and a plan of care developed to meet the individual needs of each patient.

As this work continues, behavioral health case management is expanding as a specialty practice. Behavioral health case managers work with those who have mental illness while ensuring continuation and integration of services. The term integrated case management is also used, which allows for management of patients who are medically complex and may have behavioral health issues.

There are six models in which behavioral health case managers can work to ensure targeted interventions meet the needs of each patient.

Intensive Case Management Services offer a more intensive level of support. Individuals usually see a case manager a minimum of once every 14 days, but depending on the need, 24/7 coverage is also available.

Resource Coordination is a less intensive level of support, where case managers are accessible for patients during traditional work hours and see patients at least once every 30 days.

Continuity of Care Teams provide short-term behavioral health services to help adults and children access needed services to continue their care.

Community Treatment Teams are multi-disciplinary and provide personalized and intensive case management services to help adults with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

Behavioral Health Special Initiatives increase the availability of treatment for uninsured and underinsured people dealing with substance abuse and co-occurring issues.

Children's Case Management Services provide specialized case management services for children and adolescents dealing with serious mental illness and/or substance abuse issues.

Resources

If you would like to better understand the role of case management in the area of behavioral health, the following are some resources to explore:

The National Alliance of Mental Illness: The nation's largest grassroots mental health organization is dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, support, and research. NAMI is steadfast in its commitment to raising awareness and building a community of hope for all those in need. To learn more, visit the website at <https://www.nami.org>

Case Management Society of America: The CMSA offers Integrated Case Management Training, an advanced educational program designed to provide case managers coming from either medical or mental health backgrounds with the content and skills needed to better manage patients holistically. Visit the website at <http://www.cmsa.org/education/icm>

Integrated Care in Psychiatry: Redefining the Role of Mental Health Professionals in the Medical Setting by Roger Kathol, M.D. Visit <https://www.amazon.com/Integrated-Care-Psychiatry-Redefining-Professionals/dp/1493906879> for more information.

Chemical Dependency Program Nursing



Next, let's take a look at an interesting specialty some nurses might want to consider: the role of a registered nurse in the area of chemical dependency/substance abuse.

This area of practice falls under the domain of psychiatric nursing, with a specialty in chemical dependency/substance abuse. With legislation requiring states to ensure mental health parity is part of health insurance coverage, greater assistance in mental health and addiction treatment is on the horizon.

Addiction tends to follow the social determinants of health. Populations that are poorer, less educated, oppressed, or have less access to resources, tend to have higher rates of mental health and addiction issues.

As a result, this is a difficult and vulnerable population that has intensive needs but little support or resources to meet their needs. Successful outcomes can be difficult to achieve. Small successes should be celebrated, as sometimes they are all that can be achieved.

What Experience Do You Need?

Generally, nurses who work in this role have clinical expertise in pain management, mental health, substance abuse, and general medicine. Many of the patients you will encounter have both medical and behavioral health issues that may impact each other, so training or expertise in both general medicine and mental health is critical.

As a chemical dependency nurse, you'll support people whose lives may be controlled by addiction. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Risk assessments
- Design of training and care programs
- Providing physical and emotional support for patients and their families
- Organizing family member support groups
- Serving on task forces in local, state, and federal programs to educate communities, employers, and citizens regarding addiction
- Advocating for resources to address the problems that lead to substance misuse, especially in at-risk populations
- Acting as an abuse counselor
- Administering medication and regulating patient treatment
- Assessing patients' physical health and seeking resources to diagnosis, treat, and monitor
- Assessing readiness to change and providing support and education along the way
- Assisting clients in accessing services such as counseling, healthcare, and education

- Outreach work: visiting substance users and helping with immediate needs such as temporary accommodation
- Drop-in center work: talking to clients about their needs and finding ways of supporting them toward recovery
- Counseling and rehabilitation: giving support and dealing with the causes of substance misuse
- Arrest referral work: supporting clients arrested for drug-related offenses
- Education and training: helping clients access services to assist with reading, writing, math, computer, and job search skills
- Advocacy: helping clients use housing, employment, and healthcare services
- Needle exchange: providing clean sharps and advising on how to use substances safely to reduce harm to self and society
- Prison 'CARAT' work: Counseling, Assessment, Referral, Advice, and Throughcare in prisons and remand centers, including supporting with detox programs
- Working with young adults/children: giving emotional support and helping with education, employment, and training

Chemical dependency nurses work in a variety of settings, including mental health hospitals and clinics, psychiatric wards, inpatient or outpatient treatment centers, and prisons.

As a nurse specializing in this area, you will need the following competencies:

- Empathy and a calm, caring approach
- An understanding of substance misuse issues and their impact on people

- A non-judgmental attitude
- The ability to build a trusting relationship
- The ability to work alone and as part of a team
- Excellent communication and listening skills
- Motivational interviewing
- The ability to work closely with a range of different organizations
- Respect for confidentiality
- To enjoy working with diverse populations; a “people person”
- Propensity for collaboration
- Critical thought
- Crisis intervention skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Problem solving skills
- Ability to research
- Negotiation skills
- Ability to think and react quickly
- Ability to navigate complex and unsafe areas
- To be a change agent in order to impact people and help them get their life back on track

Resources

Would you like to learn more about this field? Please visit these websites:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health: <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

Mental Health Parity: <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/publications/mhpaeareporttocongress2012.html#l>

Certificate Program in Chemical Dependency: <http://www.ce.csueastbay.edu/certificate/chemdep/index.shtml>

Chemical Dependency Courses at Cleveland State: <http://www.csuohio.edu/class/social-work/chemical-dependency-courses>

Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialist



Are you are a sharp, experienced nurse with a mind for business? Do you have a passion for accuracy and understand the importance of clear and objective documentation? Then you may want to explore the emerging role of the clinical documentation improvement specialist.

A clinical documentation improvement specialist (CDIS) provides a vital link between medical staff and the professional coders who are responsible for translating clinical information into data for healthcare providers and payers. They ensure documentation is accurate and provides a clear picture of the plan of care, the treatment delivered, and the status of the patient.

Complementing the Work of Coders

Most coders are lay professionals who have no patient care experience or in-depth clinical knowledge. They work solely with what is written and may not understand the rationale for clinical decisions that providers make each day. They are not able to analyze the information provided to them to ensure it reflects the physician's intent.

CDIS nurses, however, have the clinical training to read charts. They work at the point of care with the clinical team to ensure the documentation correctly represents the care given. This collaboration allows coders to code records accurately so reimbursement and benefit determinations are correct. Hospitals count on their clinical documentation improvement specialists to protect them from recovery audit contractors (RAC). Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial payers use the codes to determine reimbursement, and these contractors can impose penalties when documentation is not accurate.

In addition, complete and accurate documentation can help an organization appeal a decision by an RAC. With reimbursement tied to documentation, being accurate is essential.

Clinical Skills for Effective Documentation

Nurses offer a unique perspective and clinical experience to support their analysis of the medical record. Speaking the language of healthcare providers, CDIS nurses can communicate on the same level as members of the clinical team. They are used to reading progress notes, consultant reports, medication records, lab values, and radiology reports. They understand how they tie into the plan of care.

In addition, CDIS nurses use their knowledge of coding rules to help providers choose the right words to describe the diagnoses in regulatory terms. CDIS nurses may work with information from other disciplines, such as pharmacy and dietary. This documentation helps support healthcare providers' diagnoses and plan of care.

If you are thinking about this line of work, you should possess the following skills and experience: clinical experience, exceptional critical thinking skills, and the ability to prioritize and analyze data quickly and accurately. You should also be comfortable as a member of a team and sharing your knowledge in high-paced settings while making quick decisions on the fly. A large part of the job is educating healthcare providers about

current documentation standards and helping them appreciate their role in documentation improvement.

There is an emerging field where nurses who are ready to move beyond the bedside may excel.

Resources

Association of Clinical Documentation Improvement Specialists: The Certified Clinical Documentation Specialist (CCDS) credential provides a mark of distinction for this unique profession. Applicants must pass the certifying exam to receive the designation. <https://acdis.org/certification>

American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA): The premier association of health information management (HIM) professionals worldwide. Founded in 1928 to improve health record quality, AHIMA has played a leadership role in the effective management of health data and medical records needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. They have training and a national certification for those interested in clinical documentation improvement. <http://www.ahima.org/certification/cdip>

Clinical Nursing Specialist



Another area nurses may want to move into is the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). This is ideal for nurses who seek leadership positions but want to stay in the clinical area.

What Is a Clinical Nurse Specialist?

A clinical nurse specialist is an advanced practice nurse who holds a master's or doctoral degree in a specialized area of nursing practice. They provide direct patient care, serve as expert consultants for nursing staff, or take an active hand in improving healthcare delivery systems. Their scope of practice also includes diagnosing and treating diseases, injuries, and/or disabilities within their field of expertise.

They can specialize in the following areas:

- A specific population, such as pediatrics, geriatrics, or women's health
- A specific clinical setting, such as critical care or emergency room
- A specific disease or medical subspecialty, such as diabetes or oncology

- A specific type of care, such as psychiatric care or rehabilitation
- A specific type of health problem, such as pain management, wound care, or stress management

The Multi-Faceted Role of a Clinical Nurse Specialist

Clinical nurse specialists serve as coaches for patients who have one or more chronic medical conditions. They act as mentors to other nurses and members of the healthcare team to help them better understand clinical issues and make changes toward improved outcomes.

They fill the role of clinical leaders in their organizations, and they may lead in local, state, and federal government to promote health policy, access to healthcare, and other areas that impact patient care.

Clinical nurse specialists practice in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, community clinics, and other settings. They lead teams in applying evidence-based clinical protocols to improve the delivery of care.

Constructing Clinical Standards

The CNS designs clinical standards based on evidence and assists the entire clinical team in implementation.

One example is the development of a disease management protocol when an organization is having trouble addressing a disease. The CNS researches the topic, works with the clinical team to develop a protocol for addressing the problem, and helps implement the protocol from bedside to the entire system.

After the protocol is found to be meeting its goal, it may be implemented in community-based practices or even be used nationwide.

Clinical nurse specialists are viewed as leaders within their organizations and are often called to guide organizations through Magnet designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

In summary, their focus is on designing modes for the following:

- Improving clinical safety and outcomes
- Eliminating unnecessary care
- Improving care for patients with chronic medical conditions
- Finding solutions to reduce cost of care

As licensed registered nurses, the requirement for clinical nurse specialists varies state to state. To learn about the rules in your state, visit your state licensing board's website.

Getting Certified

Clinical nurse specialists can obtain certification by taking exams in various specialties. The following organizations provide certifications.

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) offers the new Clinical Nurse Specialist-Board Certified (CNS-BC) credential to individuals who successfully complete clinical nurse specialist exams in the following specializations:

- Adult Health
- Adult Psychiatric & Mental Health
- Child/Adolescent Psych & Mental Health
- Diabetes Management - Advanced
- Geriatrics
- Home Health
- Pediatrics
- Public/Community Health

The Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation offers the Oncology CNS certification. Visit <http://www.oncc.org/> for more details.

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses Certification Corporation offers the Critical Care Nurse Specialist (CCNS) certification. Visit <http://www.certcorp.org/> for more information.

The Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board offers several CNS certification exams throughout the year. Please check <http://www.oncb.org> for more information.

CCI offers the Clinical Nurse Specialist Perioperative Certification Exam (CNS-CP) for master's-prepared Clinical Nurse Specialists. CNS-CP certification validates the achievement of the CNS who has chosen to seek current proficiency as an advanced practice nurse practicing in the perioperative (pre-, intra-, and post-operative) setting. To learn more: <http://www.cc-institute.org/home>

Resources

The National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists: The national organization for clinical nurse specialists. Check out their website to learn more about this dynamic role: <http://www.nacns.org/>

Disability Case Manager



The role of the disability case manager is to assist people with disabilities become more independent and active in community life. They do this by establishing a positive and collaborative relationship with the person and their support network, including family members. They also assist the person with identifying the support they need to deal with problems and achieve their goals.

Where Do They Work?

Disability management specialists can work for large case management companies to manage claims, or for disability management insurance companies that specialize in the disability side of claims. They can also work for companies that specialize in assisting those in need, helping individuals with disabilities understand their rights and teaching them how to apply for social security disability income and other benefits to which they may be entitled.

What Can They Help With?

They can explain disability insurance policies. Many people have a personal disability policy or a disability benefit through their employer. These policies are set up to replace income lost due to the person's inability to work. Medical care is generally not part of the disability claim, so health insurance is important for access to medical care.

Disability coverage can be short-term, long-term, or a combination of both. Policies vary as to when a disability claim can be started, how long the benefits will be provided, and what criteria the person has to meet to receive and continue their benefits.

Helpful Competencies:

- Effective and motivational interviewing skills
- Ability to develop rapport with clients
- Active listening skills
- Ability to empower patients to achieve their goals
- Focus on success and abilities (as opposed to disabilities)
- Up-to-date clinical skills (both behavioral and medical)
- Ability to read or interpret policy information to direct clients and stay within guidelines
- Documentation skills
- Negotiation skills
- Ability to address conflicts of interest

Disability case managers must also possess a network of physicians and other healthcare providers for patient referrals. In addition, disability case managers must be able to help clients understand their conditions and set realistic goals so the clients can follow their plans of care and make decisions that allow them to reach their goals.

For nurses wishing to specialize in this area, there is a national certification specifically for professionals who specialize in disability case management. For more information, visit <http://www.cdms.org/>

Resources

International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals (IARP): A professional organization for disability management professionals. Visit <http://connect.rehabpro.org/home>

Disease Management/ Population Health Nurse



With healthcare costs rising, there is a strong focus on finding ways to assist consumers to prevent and manage chronic conditions. Doing so will improve quality of life and reduce personal healthcare costs.

Today, with the combination of tools such as health risk screening applications and technology, healthcare providers can predict a person's risk for chronic disease. Combining patient information—such as habits, risk factors, and family history—with data analytics, those at risk can be identified and mitigated.

Once identified, healthcare providers can help patients understand their risk factors and make changes to reduce their risk for chronic disease.

The Field of Disease Management and Population Health

There is growing dedication to the science of disease management and/or population health. The current practice of patients seeking care only when they are sick is shifting to a more proactive approach, where physicians annually provide checkups, address risk areas, and educate patients. People are empowered and actively engaged in their health.

Due to their training and clinical expertise, many nurses find this area of practice a good fit. The foremost role of the nurse in a disease management/population health program is to act as a change agent. They develop relationships with patients, as well as with the healthcare team, and employ educational strategies, coordinate care, and identify barriers that may derail patients in their efforts.

Nurses in this field also evaluate patients' readiness to change. They use techniques such as motivational interviewing to help patients determine their goals and how they will meet those goals.

Today, most nurses are trained in illness prevention, health promotion, and behavioral change. Thus, they understand the natural history of illnesses, disease progression, and strategies to educate consumers. With these skills, they can help patients improve their health and wellness, plus teach them to be proactive in the management of chronic conditions.

Nurses join primary care physicians, pharmacists, dietitians, and other healthcare professionals in this growing area.

Where Do Disease Management/Population Health Nurses Work?

Nurses in this specialty typically work in hospitals, managed care companies, and disease management/wellness programs. They encourage people to take an active role in the delivery of their healthcare. They ensure people understand their conditions and have the tools to monitor and self-manage their conditions. They also provide support that fosters independence from, rather than dependence on, the healthcare system.

Disease management/population health is a relatively new field for nurses, but it can benefit from nurses' knowledge and expertise. The disease management approach combines case management and utilization review, plus health promotion and illness prevention. The ultimate goal is to improve the health status of a patient or a population. Ideally, disease management also aims to reduce healthcare costs by focusing on those

with chronic diseases or moderate-to-severe acute illnesses. These patients are responsible for the middle one-third of healthcare costs.

Disease management nurses also serve as patient advocates. They acknowledge not only patient rights, but also their responsibilities.

Resources

Professional Organizations

Case Management Society of America (CMSA): the largest professional organization dedicated to professionals working as case managers across the broad healthcare spectrum. Visit their website at www.cmsa.org

Population Health Alliance: advances the principles of population health improvement so they become pillars of our healthcare system. Go to <http://www.populationhealthalliance.org/> for more information.

Jefferson College of Population Health

From the Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH) website: “Established in 2008, we are part of Thomas Jefferson University, a leading academic health center founded in Philadelphia, PA in 1824 as Jefferson Medical College (now the Sidney Kimmel Medical College). We are dedicated to exploring the policies and forces that define the health and well-being of populations. Our mission is to prepare leaders with global vision to examine the social determinants of health and to evaluate, develop and implement health policies and systems that will improve the health of populations and thereby enhance the quality of life.” To learn more, visit the website at <http://www.jefferson.edu/university/population-health.html>

Awards Programs

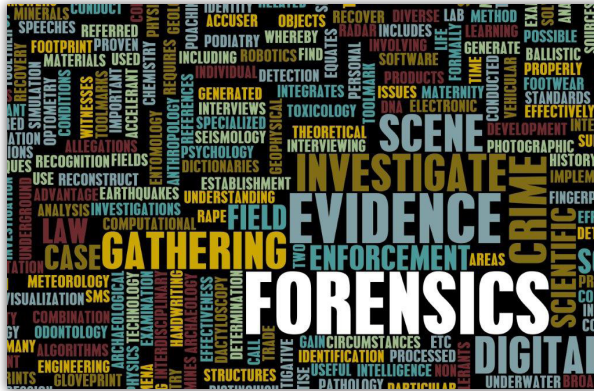
Professionals and organizations doing good work in the area of disease management/population health can apply for two awards programs:

- The Jefferson/Hearst Health Prize — To learn more, visit the Jefferson College of Population Health website at <http://www.jefferson.edu/university/population-health/population-health-innovation/hearst-health-prize.html>
- The Decision Health Platinum Awards — To learn more, go to the website for the Platinum Awards at <http://www.decisionhealth.com/platinumawards>

Certification Programs for Professionals in Disease Management

The Certified Case Manager (CCM) title is administered by the Commission for Case Manager Certification. It is the most recognized national certification for professionals specializing in care or case management. Many professionals who work in the area of disease management or population health have become certified through this organization.

The Chronic Care Professional (CCP) certification is administered by the Health Sciences Institute. This organization provides learning and a certification program that is nationally recognized in the areas of health coaching and chronic care training. Visit their website at <http://healthsciences.org/>



Correctional Nursing Specialists

Correctional nursing specialists provide quality healthcare to individuals detained by the courts, including those in jail, prison, juvenile offender facilities, and other correctional institutions. Within these facilities, correctional nursing specialists may coordinate care for inmates with acute and chronic medical conditions.

Forensic Clinical Nurse Specialists

Forensic clinical nurse specialists use their advanced training to serve as expert clinicians, teachers, researchers, consultants, and administrators in various forensic settings. They work in a variety of settings that can include: the emergency department, sexual assault examination programs, psychiatric forensic treatment units, or even with death investigation teams.

Forensic Gerontology Specialists

Forensic gerontology specialists investigate cases involving the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of elders. They work to raise awareness regarding legal and human rights issues. Areas where specialists work can include: hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities that provide care or services for the elderly.

Forensic Nurse Investigators

Forensic nurse investigators uncover the circumstances surrounding an unexpected or violent death. Typically employed in a medical examiner's or coroner's office, forensic nurse investigators examine the body, study the scene, assist in autopsies, and collect medical and social history information on the deceased in order to determine the exact cause of death. Forensic nurse investigators often work with nurse coroners or death investigators.

Forensic Psychiatric Nurses

Forensic psychiatric nurses specialize in managing offenders with psychological, social, and behavioral disorders. They assess and select patients for treatment, provide rehabilitative care, and supervise a patient's actions within the community. In addition, forensic psychiatric nurses may examine and treat criminal defendants and assist colleagues who have witnessed assaults or experienced some form of emotional trauma.

Legal Nurse Consultants

Legal nurse consultants aid attorneys working on civil cases where the law and medicine overlap. Some of these situations might include medical malpractice, personal injury, workers' compensation, and probate. Legal nurse consultants apply their forensic nursing education and clinical experience to interpret, research, and analyze the medically-related

information relevant to a case or claim, educating attorneys about medical facts and acting as liaisons between attorneys, physicians, and clients.

Nurse Coroners or Death Investigators

Nurse coroners or death investigators apply their nursing skills to crime scene investigations. As the first forensic professional to arrive at the scene of a suspicious death, a nurse coroner or death investigator analyzes the scene and examines the body to approximate the time of death and to find medical clues that might explain the cause.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners

Sexual assault nurse examiners offer compassionate, prompt care to victims of sexual assault. Qualified through a specialized forensic nursing education, they assess and evaluate injuries that a victim has suffered. They locate, collect, and package forensic evidence relevant to the crime and provide information or referrals regarding the victim's continued care. In the court room, sexual assault nurse examiners represent the victim, serving as expert witnesses who offer testimony based on their documented evidence.

What skills do you need to enter the field of forensic nursing?

- Clinical expertise
- Compassion
- Critical thinking
- Emotional stability
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Patience
- Attention to detail
- Organizational skills
- Research skills

Through a blend of clinical experience and knowledge of the criminal justice system, forensic nurses have a profound effect on the criminal justice system and the public at large. A forensic nurse can make a difference in the health of patients, the victims whose voices they represent, and the communities they improve as a result of their expertise.

Resources

To learn more about this dynamic nursing specialty, visit these websites, where you will discover educational requirements, certification/certificate programs, and resources you can use to better understand the role of the forensic nurse.

International Association of Forensic Nursing: <http://www.forensicnurses.org>

American Academy of Forensic Science: www.aafs.org

Association of Legal Nurse Consultants: <http://www.aalnc.org>

American Forensic Nursing: <http://amrn.com>

Geriatric Care Management



According to the website of the Association of Aging Life Care Specialists, geriatric care managers are health and human service specialists who act as guides and advocates for families who are caring for older relatives or disabled adults. They are educated and experienced in any of several disciplines, including nursing, social work, gerontology, and psychology, with specialized focus on issues related to aging and elder care.

Geriatric care managers provide a wide range of services that focus on:

- Housing – Helping the client and/or family evaluate and select appropriate levels of housing or other residential options
- Home care services – Determining the services that are right for the client and assisting the family in engaging and monitoring those services
- Medical management – Attending physician appointments and facilitating communication between doctor, client, and family; if appropriate, monitoring the client's adherence to the plan of care

- Communications – Keeping family members and healthcare professionals informed about the well-being and changing needs of the client
- Social activities – Providing opportunities for the client to engage in social, recreational, or cultural activities that enrich quality of life
- Legal – Referring to elder law attorneys and providing expert opinion for determining levels of care
- Financial – May include reviewing or overseeing bill payments; may also involve consulting with an accountant or dealing with a clients' power of attorney
- Entitlements – Providing information on federal and state entitlements and connecting families to local programs
- Safety and security – Monitoring the client at home; recommending technologies to improve security or safety; observing changes for potential risks of exploitation and abuse

Like other case managers, the geriatric care manager will develop a plan of care tailored for each individual's circumstances. This is done following a comprehensive assessment in collaboration with the client, the family, and the treatment team.

Most geriatric care managers work independently and contract directly with the client, family, elder care attorney, or others who may hold the person's finances. They maintain their cases for a long time, and they build a close professional relationship with both the client and the family. They assist patients with many aspects of life to ensure they are safe and experience a great quality of life as they age.

Resources

The professional organization for this field is the Aging Life Care Association. You may visit the organization's regional chapters to network with professionals in this practice. Learn more at <http://www.aginglifecare.org>

Health/Wellness and Fitness Coach



Health, wellness, and fitness coaching is a growing profession in the healthcare industry. It is also expanding in the corporate sector because experts believe that personal, one-to-one health coaching is an important part of a successful, results-oriented employee wellness program. Why? Because these health coaches help people avoid or cope with preventable health risks that cost the U.S. healthcare system hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

Research shows that employees who are obese, chronically stressed, or who smoke are more likely to suffer from health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. Obviously, this has a negative impact on their well-being and productivity. It also adds to their employers' healthcare costs. Hence, employers hire health and wellness coaches to improve health outcomes and reduce health costs for individuals, employers, and the nation.

Why Nurses?

Nurses are in a unique position to become part of this growing practice. By combining the art and science of nursing, this new career path offers

nurses the opportunity to draw upon their knowledge and skills. They may effectively assist consumers in meeting and achieving the goal of living a healthy lifestyle.

Coaches come from a variety of professions. Dietitians, exercise physiologists, health education specialists, and mental health professionals are also entering this emerging field.

Health coaching programs are designed to guide and motivate people to make lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, curbing tobacco use, managing stress, and increasing physical activity. These actions can improve mood and prevent chronic conditions. By addressing the range of physical, emotional, and environmental factors that influence people's behavior, health coaching is tailored to an individual's specific needs and challenges. It can result in measurable, goal-oriented outcomes.

Where and How Do Health and Fitness Coaches Work?

Health, wellness, and fitness coaches work in managed care organizations, health systems, and in the corporate workplace. They can even set up independent practices. Meanwhile, coaching support can be delivered through person-to-person or group consultation. Coaching can be done at the worksite, online, or over the phone.

Typically, the health coach initiates outreach to identify a participant's level of risk and determine the amount of support he or she may need. This is done via a telephone interview or an in-person assessment. Assuming the employee is ready and willing to develop a relationship with the coach and to make positive lifestyle changes, the coach will customize a program and set a coaching schedule. The participant and coach then work side-by-side on any number of activities that might include setting goals, learning new skills, and understanding biometric data.

Nurses who want to enter this field will need additional training, as health, wellness, and fitness coaching is different from traditional nursing.

Resources

To learn more about this area, visit the following websites:

HealthSciences Institute: <http://www.healthsciences.org>

Well Coaches School of Coaching and National Certification: http://www.wellcoachesschool.com/index.cfm?page=CT_ProfCC

Integrative Nurse Coaching: <http://inursecoach.com/>

Home Healthcare Nursing



Patients who do not require continued stay in an acute care hospital but do require additional care may have care provided in their homes. Today, a wide range of services can be provided in the home, such as telemedicine, IV therapy, wound care, and administration of medications. Home care can be used during treatment and management of chronic conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, endocarditis, diabetes, and other conditions that require long-term treatment.

Home care nurses assist patients to better understand their conditions, organize their medications, and understand what signs and symptoms they need to be aware of and what to do if issues arise. Home care nurses are the eyes and ears of physicians and the managed care company. They can alert the care team when issues arise and help patients and their families understand the challenges they face. They design programs to meet the needs of their patients. Home care nurses are critical to ensuring safe transitions of care for patients at risk.

Nurses who specialize in home healthcare provide care for a wide range of patients, including the elderly, children, or others who require skilled

care for various conditions. Home care nurses also provide hospice and palliative care.

What Does It Mean to Work Outside the Hospital?

Nurses who work outside a hospital setting must be self-directed and able to manage their time with little support. In addition to being proficient clinicians, they must possess strong communication skills and be able to work with people from various cultures and lifestyles. They work not only with patients, but also with patients' families. Their work can be physically demanding and might require lifting, turning, or moving patients who need the assistance. They also must travel to patients' homes, potentially navigating unfamiliar neighborhoods. Safety is also a concern, so diligence about one's surroundings is important.

Desired Experience

Nurses who might be appropriate for this specialty area must have at least two years of nursing experience, preferably in critical care such as the emergency room or the intensive care unit. Both registered nurses and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) work in home care, but LPNs must be supervised by registered nurses, as they are not able to work independently according to their scope of practice.

Nurses should have some or all of the following skills to work in this area:

- Clinical skills
- Specialized clinical skills (if working in a specialized area, such as pediatrics or oncology)
- Critical thinking skills
- Organizational skills
- Communication skills
- Knowledge and use of medical equipment
- Attention to detail

- Listening skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Creativity
- An understanding of community resources

If you are looking for a role that allows you to use your skills and work independently with patients and their families, you may want to consider working in the area of home health.

Resources

Currently there is no national certification for home care nurses, but there are three professional organizations for nurses who work in this area:

National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC): <http://www.nahc.org>

The Visiting Nurse Association of America: <http://www.vnaa.org/>

Home Healthcare Nurses Association (HHNA): <http://www.hhna.org>

You may also wish to review the following book if you choose this area of practice: *Exploring the Home Health Care Experience: A Guide To Transitioning Your Career Path*, available at https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0175IDAVK/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Hospital Patient Advocate



Today, with 30 percent of hospital reimbursement based on the patient experience, hospitals are providing hospital patient advocates to work directly with patients and their families. They proactively address issues that could impact patients' experiences and ensure patients know their rights.

What Do Hospital Patient Advocates Do?

Hospital patient advocates understand the workings of their own hospitals and collaborate with various departments when issues arise. They meet with patients and their families to address concerns regarding their treatment, medical errors, communication, and transition of care. Advocates may bring the healthcare team together with patients and their families to discuss challenges and break down barriers.

Hospital advocates also handle complaints and grievances that patients, visitors, and others may make against their organization. They work to resolve issues according to their organization's regulatory and accreditation standards.

The advocate is part of the crisis team before, during, and after any crisis. The advocate's role during a crisis is to represent patients and advocate for their rights and safety.

Hospital advocates hold various titles, such as *patient representative* and *health advocate*. They may work in various departments, such as administration, risk management, or patient experience.

Many feel that hospital advocates are unable to be objective, as they are employees of the hospital, but support from the hospital's senior leadership makes objective patient advocacy possible.

Hospital advocates are viewed as:

- Team builders
- Collaborators
- Educators
- Facilitators
- Mediators
- Organizers
- Researchers
- Conflict resolvers
- Problem solvers
- Scribes

Competencies needed in this field include:

- Excellent communication skills
- Conflict resolution strategies
- Organization skills
- Collaboration skills
- Empowerment skills

- Ability to identify issues and break down barriers
- Team building skills
- Education skills
- Facilitation skills
- Mediator skills
- Research skills
- Problem solving skills

Today, there are no national guidelines nor a national certification for the hospital advocate, but they are on the horizon. Training programs also exist for those entering the practice. These courses can range from one-day introductory programs to 3-, 6-, 9- or 12-month programs. In addition, professional organizations will provide ongoing education as the industry evolves. Those who are considering hospital patient advocacy should take the time to research the practice to see if it is an area they want to move into.

Resources

Professional Patient Advocate Institute (PPAI): Offers two e-learning certificate programs—one for Independent Patient Advocates and another for Hospital Advocates. To learn more, visit www.patientadvocatetraining.com

Beryl Institute: The Beryl Institute is the global community of practice and the premier thought leader on improving the patient experience in healthcare. It is the professional organization for those specializing in improving the patient experience. <http://www.theberylinstitute.org>

The Alliance of Professional Patient Advocates: A member organization for patient advocates. The organization provides tools and information to grow your practice. To learn more, visit <https://www.aphadvocates.org>

Patient Advocate Certification Board: the national body working to develop a certification for those working in the field of Patient Advocacy. To keep up to date on the workings of the board, visit the website at <https://pacboard.org>

Independent Patient Advocate



Independent patient advocates ensure consumers have a voice in the care they receive. They provide patients with information to improve their health and be active participants in their health and healthcare.

What Do Independent Patient Advocates Do?

Healthcare is complex, fragmented, costly, and difficult to navigate. As a result, consumers are looking for help in understanding the healthcare system. They need someone to provide objective guidance so they can make the best decisions.

Independent patient advocates are meeting this need. They assist consumers and their families as they deal with personal health challenges. Advocates assist consumers with arranging care coordination, untangling billing issues, reviewing insurance denials and appeals, and finding resources such as alternative living arrangements when someone can no longer live alone.

Patient advocates work with the patient and their families every step of the way to navigate the complex healthcare system to ensure patients are prepared and armed with information.

Advocates do research and provide consumers with information to make decisions, but they do not make decisions for consumers. They ensure patients have a voice in their care and that the plan of care is designed to meet their goals, which improves adherence to the plan of care.

It is believed that consumers who are armed with information will demand high-quality care from their providers. They will choose treatment options wisely and become active participants and managers of their own health and care.

Presently, however, consumers are not trained to fill this role. They often fall through the gaps and get lost in the system. Many consumers also distrust the healthcare system, as they perceive the system to be set up to work for the providers/payers—not the patient. Thus, advocates are gaining in popularity.

Differentiating Patient Advocacy

You may see some similarities between advocates, case managers, and other healthcare professionals. What sets patient advocates apart is that they work directly for the consumer and are independent from the payer and providers.

Patient advocates come from various backgrounds. They can be nurses, social workers, and other professionals who want to work directly with consumers.

Building an Enterprise

Most nurses view themselves as patient advocates and do not have difficulty transitioning into this role. They are challenged, however, by

how to build a business around patient advocacy, as they are not used to charging for or marketing their services. In addition, consumers are just beginning to learn about and understand the benefits of advocates.

Today, there are no national guidelines or national certification in place for patient advocates, but they are on the horizon. Training programs also exist for those entering the practice. These courses can range from one-day introductory programs to 3-, 6-, 9- or 12-month programs. Those who are considering this emerging field should take the time to research the practice to see if it is an area they want to move into.

Resources

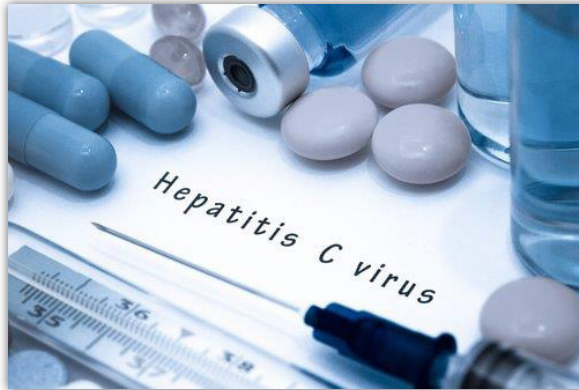
Professional Patient Advocate Institute (PPAI): Offers training workshops on demand and on-site for those looking to enter the field. To learn more, visit <http://www.patientadvocatetraining.com/>

National Association Healthcare Advocacy Consultants (NAHAC): A membership organization for independent advocates. To learn more, visit <http://nahac.memberlodge.com/>

The Alliance of Professional Patient Advocates: A membership organization for patient advocates. The organization provides tools and resources you can use to grow your practice. To learn more, visit Health/Patient Advocate Certification Steering Committee Work at <https://www.aphadvocates.org>

Patient Advocate Certification Board: The national body working to develop a certification for those working in the field of Patient Advocacy. The site will keep you up to date as a national certification is rolled out. The goal of the certification is to validate the practice and provide consumers with a way to understand the qualifications professional advocates should possess. To sign up for updates, visit the website <https://pacboard.org>

Infectious Disease Nursing



Today, with the antibiotic resistance crisis and the impact on health and healthcare, many nurses are considering infection disease as an area of focus as they advance in nursing.

Infectious disease nurses, sometimes referred to as infection prevention nurses, are on the front lines of treating and curing illnesses that have an incredible impact on entire populations. The demand for their skills and expertise increases as new infections are discovered and spread. Their contributions to the health and welfare of their organizations as well greater public health can bring immeasurable professional and personal rewards.

Where Do Infectious Disease Nurses Work?

Nurses who specialize in this area may work in hospitals, nursing homes, and community health services, including non-profit health care clinics, universities, and other settings in the United States and around the world. Their task is to reduce the conditions that allow transmission of infectious diseases. They respond to outbreaks of infections and conditions that may result in more widespread impact if not contained.

Infectious disease nurses can also serve as policy-makers, administrators, educators, consultants, and researchers. They may be asked to develop policies regarding infectious diseases as events occur. They also monitor their facilities for compliance.

In a day's work, infectious diseases nurses might provide care for patients who suffer from the following:

- Sepsis
- New outbreaks of conditions
- Infections that are not responding to multiple drugs
- Large, complicated wounds that require advanced clinical care
- Conditions that requires special isolation requirements

Responsibilities

Infectious disease nurses may be asked to do the following:

- Evaluate cost-effectiveness and outcomes of patient care
- Examine and facilitate solutions to economic, social, ethical, and legal issues related to patient care
- Develop and implement leadership strategies that demonstrate responsibility and improve health care
- Perform and communicate nursing research and results

Infectious disease is a multidisciplinary practice where physicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, clinical nurses, and others may specialize. Nurses may work alongside members of environmental services, housekeeping, dietary, quality management, and risk management departments on infectious control divisions or committees.

Certification

The national certification for infectious disease nurses is the Certification Board of Infection Control and Epidemiology. Certification in infection control is available for licensed medical practitioners including LPNs, RNs, nurse practitioners, physicians, medical technologists, and respiratory therapists with current registration.

Resources

Association for Professionals in Infection Control: <http://www.apic.org/>

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA): www.idsociety.org

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA): www.shea-online.org

The HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA): www.hivma.org

The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS): www.pids.org

Interim Healthcare Leadership



The healthcare industry is more complex and competitive than ever. As a result, the demand for efficiency and consistent positive results has never been greater. At the same time, the industry has an aging workforce. Experienced leaders in nursing and other clinical areas are reaching retirement at a rapid pace and leaving the profession and leadership positions open.

This scenario has led to growth in interim healthcare leadership at hospitals and other organizations. Interim leaders provide support to an organization for a limited period of time while a permanent replacement is identified and vetted for the position. Organizations are using professionals in interim positions such as nursing, case management, and quality management.

Skills aspiring interim professionals should possess:

- Ability to quickly adapt to a new organization and new staff
- Good organization skills
- Managing during disruptive times
- Excellent communication and presentation skills

- Sound knowledge of current financial, regulatory, and contemporary practice guidelines in the leadership role being filled
- Project management and plan execution
- Ability to:
 - » think critically
 - » bring new ideas that address challenges and improve processes
 - » fit the organization's culture
 - » step into an uncertain situation and gain control
 - » get up to speed quickly
 - » effect change without alienating people

Opportunities for Interim Leaders

Interim leadership positions can be an interesting career move for nurses, especially those who have leadership experience and enjoy a challenge. Interim leaders aid organizations during disruptive times and carry them through in an organized manner. Many also assist the organization find a permanent leader.

Challenges Interim Leaders Face

Interim leaders face obvious challenges, such as entering unfamiliar, possibly hostile, organizations. Interim managers may face a staff team that has lost a key leader; they are often worried what the change will bring. The ability to work collaboratively is critical.

When interviewing for interim leadership positions, nurses should ask why the position is open. Learning the history behind the open position will illuminate some of the challenges nurses may encounter. The hiring team may be looking for someone to 'fix' the organization's problems or meet goals that may not be achievable within the contracted time frame. As such, it is important to set realistic expectations at the outset.

When interviewing, nurses should share a plan for what can be accomplished and how it can be done. They should not make promises or present themselves with skills they do not have, as the deficiencies will come through quickly. They should review the contract and understand the needs of the position so they are clear on the role and expectations.

Many interim healthcare leaders face the challenge of being away from home; they often are employed in faraway cities. Living in temporary housing with limited time to travel home can be unsettling. Interim positions are temporary, and nurses may find themselves out of employment for a week, two weeks, or even a month between assignments. Consider these challenges and decide if this type of position is right for you.

Searching for Interim Healthcare Management Jobs

How to find a company that provides interim services? A simple Google search will reveal a number of companies. Make sure the placement company provides good benefits for interim staff. Many provide healthcare benefits and a 401k plan.

Be aware of the company travel policies and reimbursement for expenses while on the road or at the airport. If you will be reimbursed for travel expenses, develop a system to track and submit your expenses in a timely manner so you do not get behind on your bills. Also check into the pay schedule, as some organizations pay once monthly.

Be sure to read the contract carefully and make sure you have the skills to do a good job. Do not be afraid to turn down a position if it does not seem like a good fit.

That said, working as an interim leader can be an interesting experience for those who have an adventurous spirit!

Legal Nurse Consultant



Legal nurse consultants are registered nurses who work with attorneys on medical-related legal cases. They use their clinical expertise to assist attorneys in understanding medical records, terminology, and other clinical data.

Legal nurse consultants must have an active nurse's license. They can come from all areas of nursing, but they usually have broad knowledge of medical-surgical nursing and critical care. Many also have experience in specialty nursing practices, such as obstetrics, oncology, cardiology, or neurology, to name a few. These backgrounds provide familiarity with the subject matter that enables them to review and critically analyze a wide variety of medical legal cases.

Legal matters that require the expertise of a legal nurse consultant include personal injury, medical malpractice, and product and nursing liability lawsuits, as well as forensic nursing, expert witness testimony, fraud, and abuse cases.

Traditionally a minimum of five years' prior clinical experience is recommended prior to entering the field.

Skills Needed

The problem-solving approach of the nursing process is also used in the practice of legal nurse consulting. The core functions include assessment, analysis, issue identification, outcomes identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Most professionals who enter the field have no legal background when they begin the transition from clinical nursing to the legal field. Some choose to attend a formal legal nurse consulting program, a paralegal program, or other legal seminars and programs. Others learn through on-the-job training in law firms or by self-study and working with attorneys.

Specific duties of legal nurse consultants vary widely but might include the following:

- Screening cases for merit for both plaintiff and defense attorneys
- Locating and interviewing witnesses and preparing witness reports for trial
- Formulating medical-legal theories
- Handling plaintiffs' medical records
- Analyzing and interpreting information for defense attorneys

Legal nurse consultants also are hired as expert witnesses to give testimony in depositions, hearings, arbitration, and trials. They can work for a law firm, an insurance company, or a hospital. They can also work independently.

Resources

The American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants: The professional organization for legal nurse consultants. The website shares a good number of resources for those interested in this field. To learn more about this exciting field, visit <http://www.aalnc.org>

Life Care Planning



Life care planners create a road map for those who have suffered catastrophic injuries and illnesses. They advocate for patients and develop plans that encompass a lifetime of care. This can include costs, current and future needs, services, and equipment over the patient’s lifetime.

The life care planner examines a number of factors and considers the costs. In addition to medical costs, the life care planner looks at the costs of durable medical equipment, home modifications, lifestyle, education, transportation, life expectancy, and caregiving issues, just to name a few. Life care planners also work with others, such as actuaries and healthcare providers, who supply information needed to develop the plan.

Life care plans are requested by patients and their families, insurance companies, plaintiff or defense attorneys, employers, managed care organizations, and others. Life care planners’ reports are viewed by attorneys and the courts to make decisions that determine a person’s care needs and the cost of those care needs over their lifetime.

Clients of life care planners include newborn babies who have birth injuries or congenital anomalies, as well as children with medical, behavioral, or

developmental conditions, or injuries from accidents. They may also work with adults who experience catastrophic injuries or chronic conditions, or those experiencing Alzheimer's or other limiting life-long conditions.

Nurses as Life Care Planners

Nurses are a good fit for this role, as they have the experience and expertise to understand the scope of an illness and/or injury and the impact on the patient. Nurses in this specialty should possess the following competencies: creativity, the ability to conduct extensive research, and attention to detail.

Many nurse life care planners work independently and act as consultants for businesses, families, attorneys, accountants, and others.

Collaborations with Life Care Planners

Depending on the scope of the case, life care planners may be involved with their patients long-term, or they may contract with others, such as independent case managers, patient advocates, or home care agencies, as part of the life care plan. Life care planners may also discuss how to prevent complications, as well as assist patients and their families live their lives as normally as possible.

Training and Certifications

Nurses entering this field need additional training to learn the specific skills and processes used to develop life care plans. They may obtain certifications or join professional organizations to network, learn, and keep up with the emerging practice.

Resources

International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals: <http://www.rehabpro.org>

American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners: <http://www.aanlcp.org>

The Care Planner Network: <http://www.careplanners.net/>

The Foundation for Life Care Planning Research (FLCPR): <http://www.flcpr.org>

Managed Care Case Management



Managed care is another area where nurse case managers are employed. Their goal is to improve the delivery of care and to contain healthcare costs.

Managed care nurses practice in a variety of settings. They may work directly with clients and their caregivers, liaising with the healthcare providers, the managed care organization, and community agencies. They may also practice in settings where direct member care is delivered, particularly those organizations assuming financial or clinical outcome risk, such as population health programs.

Today, many payers are set up with managed care plans in the hopes of providing coordinated care. Managed care plans utilize provider networks that allow costs to be controlled. Managed care is found in various pay systems such as Medicare (Medicare Advantage Plans), Medicaid, and commercial insurance plans.

Models of Case Management

Managed care organizations use case management practices to accomplish their goals. Case management models include telephonic, field, and a new area known as embedded case management.

Telephonic Case Management

Telephonic case managers work either at a home office or in a traditional office setting, connecting with members via telephone. They provide a wide range of services to assist patients in understanding their conditions and helping them navigate the complex healthcare system.

Traditionally, case managers are assigned members according to the organization's method of identification for case management. Most are high-risk patients. The goal is to identify the patients' risk areas and address the individual needs of the members. As such, telephonic case managers generally have large caseloads and must be able to prioritize their work load.

Telephonic case managers also need good assessment skills and listening skills, as they do not interact with patients face-to-face. They rely on listening skills to build a trusting relationship and identify challenges that a patient may be experiencing but has not expressed.

They follow the core case management concept of assessment to develop a plan of care that includes short- and long-term goals. Once done, they implement the plan. These case managers then proactively monitor the plan to ensure it is effective in meeting the member's needs.

Field Case Management

Managed care case managers also work as field case managers. In this model, the case manager meets assigned patients at hospitals, physicians' offices, or in their homes. They perform their assessments, develop plans

of care, and follow up with the patients to ensure the plans of care are meeting their needs.

Field case management allows case managers to assess patients in a more traditional manner over many visits. It allows them to witness the patient firsthand, including facial expressions and body language. They also have the opportunity to meet the patient's family and other members of the care team, which can provide greater insights into the member's needs.

Field case managers may address challenges with a member for a short time, or they may work with the patient long-term, depending on the managed care organization model.

New Model: Embedded Care Case Management

Today, as payers and providers are working closely to provide effective care coordination for members with chronic conditions, a new model of case management has emerged. Managed care organizations realize they can no longer manage patients only when they enter the hospital.

As a result, case managers are now being embedded or assigned to the physician's office. The goal is to strengthen primary care practices so at-risk patients have a way to get answers and address issues before they require hospital admission. Aetna is a managed care company that has taken a lead in this area. The company has documented outcomes that show the effectiveness of the role of the embedded case manager. Read the case study on the Commonwealth Fund's website at <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/newsletters/quality-matters/2010/august-september-2010/case-study>

Nurses as Managed Care Case Managers

Generally, case managers who work in managed care are considered generalists, as they are called upon to work with patients with a variety of conditions and ages. Some managed care organizations have specialized

case managers for areas such as behavioral health, pediatrics, high risk OB, and geriatrics.

Many managed care organizations train nurses who have the clinical expertise to work in the managed care arena. However, some require case managers to have post-bedside experience, such as home care, as it shows that the nurse can work outside the traditional hospital setting. Nurses who work in managed care must have excellent assessment skills, good computer skills, and be able to communicate effectively.

Resources

If you would like to learn more about case management and the opportunities in managed care, view these resources:

American Association of Managed Care Nurses: The professional organization for nurses who specialize in managed care. Visit <http://www.aamcn.org/>

Case Management Society of America: The professional organization for workers in case management. CMSA has local chapters in cities across the U.S. You can attend their meeting as a guest to network with case management professionals and learn about available opportunities. Go to <http://www.cmsa.org/>

Medical Coding and Billing Specialist



Another alternative career for nurses is working as medical billing and coding specialists. They are a vital link among patients, doctors, health systems, and insurance companies. These specialists are responsible for making certain insurance companies have the right information while ensuring patients know their billing and payment options. They track bills, payments, test results, and medications to assist healthcare professionals with making diagnoses and treatment plans.

Without medical coding and billing specialists, provider organizations would experience severe—even dangerous—lack of communication and information transfer. Charges would go unbilled or unpaid, patient data would be disorganized, and insurance information would not be verified or correctly utilized.

Why Medical Coding?

Nurses are ideal candidates for becoming medical coders due to their training and insights into the delivery of care. They understand the ins-and-outs of patient charts. They also intimately understand the workings of

the healthcare system and how to choose the correct procedure codes for proper billing.

Healthcare is a business. Billing correctly is critical to ensure hospitals and providers receive payments for the work they do. Organizations rely on payments to run their operations, and correct coding enables them to be reimbursed for the work. The dollars collected pay the operation costs and salaries for the staff they employ.

With proper coding, professionals help ensure hospitals and providers receive insurance payments for services provided. Coders, in many ways, are responsible for how much revenue providers and hospitals earn. Skillful coding requires training and frequent updates to remain up-to-date with frequent changes from commercial payers and federal and state regulations.

Coding Sets Billers Must Know

CPT codes are numbers assigned to every task and service a medical practitioner may provide to a patient. These include medical, surgical, and diagnostic services. Insurers reimburse practitioners based on the codes provided to them. All healthcare facilities and practitioners use the same coding system to ensure consistency across providers.

Currently, providers use ICD-10 code sets to report medical diagnoses and inpatient procedures. ICD-10 codes allow for great specificity and exactness in describing a patient's diagnosis and in classifying inpatient procedures. ICD-10 also accommodates newly developed diagnoses and procedures, innovations in technology and treatment, performance-based payment systems, and more accurate billing. ICD-10 coding makes the billing process more streamlined and efficient. It also allows for more precise methods of detecting fraud.

Transitions and Certifications

The number of codes and the formation of the codes are changing dramatically, meaning coders must be retrained to stay up to date. Hospitals and providers are also working diligently to update technology, processes, and procedures to comply with the new system.

Professional coders are required to receive training and be certified. They are also required to attend continuing education programs to stay informed on changes.

Nurses and case managers should be familiar with coding rules or be able to refer patients to the correct staff when they ask questions about their bills. Learning how to read a patient's bill is important for all healthcare professionals to prevent and correct errors.

Resources

There are many websites to learn more about billing and coding. Here are a few to get you started.

Drexel University Medical and Billing Certificate Program: <http://www.drexel.com/online-degrees/nursing-degrees/medical-billing-coding/index.aspx>

American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA): A national organization for professionals involved in coding and billing. AHIMA's primary goals are to provide knowledge, resources, and tools to advance the health information professional practice and standards for the delivery of quality healthcare. Visit their site at <http://www.ahima.org>

The Commission on Certification for Health Informatics and Information Management (CCHIIM): Managed by AHIMA. Learn more at <http://www.ahima.org/certification/cchiim>

Nurse Educator



Nurse educators are in high demand. The U.S. is experiencing a serious nursing shortage, and the lack of nurse educators to train future nurses contributes to the shortage. If you like to teach this might be a career to consider.

Nurse educators are registered nurses with advanced education degrees who are also teachers. Most worked as nurses before moving into the role of educating future nurses.

Nurse educators serve as faculty members in nursing schools and teaching hospitals. They share their knowledge and skills to prepare the next generation of nurses for effective practice. They develop lesson plans, teach courses, evaluate educational programs, oversee students' clinical practices, and serve as role models for their students. They may teach general courses, or they may focus on areas of specialization, such as geriatric nursing, pediatric nursing, or nursing informatics.

Competencies Needed

Nurse educators have extensive clinical experience and may even continue to work in the clinical area and care for patients while working as educators. Even if they no longer practice, nurse educators must stay informed on new nursing methods and technologies.

With experience, nurse educators have many avenues to pursue, such as administrative roles, managing nurse education programs, writing or reviewing textbooks, and developing continuing education programs for working nurses.

Education Needed

At a minimum, nurse educators who work in academic settings must hold a master's degree. In order to be promoted to the upper academic ranks (i.e., associate professor and professor) and to be granted tenure, academic faculty typically must hold a doctoral degree. Nurse educators who work in clinical settings must hold at minimum a baccalaureate degree in nursing, but more and more institutions are requiring a master's degree for such positions.

Many master's degree and post-graduate certificate programs are available to prepare nurses specifically for the educator role. These programs, many of which are offered online, focus on the skills advanced practice nurses need to teach, including instruction on the learning process, curriculum development, student counseling, program evaluation, and the principles of adult education.

Dozens of baccalaureate-to-PhD programs are available for nurses with a bachelor of science in nursing degree looking to pursue doctoral preparation. These programs, which include intense clinical experiences, move students through graduate level study at an accelerated pace.

Many federal and private sources offer funding to help students who are looking to pursue graduate nursing education. The recent Nurse Reinvestment Act (available at <http://www.nursingworld.org/NurseReinvestmentAct.aspx>) includes a student loan repayment program for nurses who agree to serve in faculty roles after graduation. Similar programs are available through the National Health Service Corps and the Bureau of Health Professions. To learn more, visit their websites at <https://nhsc.hrsa.gov> and <https://bhw.hrsa.gov>

Resources

If you considering moving into an educator role, you may want to explore the following resources:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing: www.aacn.nche.edu

American Society for Training and Development: www.astd.org

National Nursing Staff Development Organization: www.nnsdo.org

Nurse Navigator



Nurse navigators are patient educators whose mission is to improve the experience of patients diagnosed with complex conditions, such as cancer, organ transplants, or catastrophic injuries. Nurse navigators provide a support system at a critical time. They help patients of all ages, and their families, understand the plan of care and work to decrease fragmentation and roadblocks in the system.

Nurse navigators are often used in oncology departments and cancer centers. Here, they play a critical role in helping patients gain access to care and assisting them through all phases of cancer care, from screening, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. In many organizations, navigation programs are comprised of layperson advocates as well as nurse navigators.

Where and When Was the Patient Navigation Concept Developed?

The concept of patient navigation in the area of oncology was developed in the late 1980s by Dr. Harold Freeman, a surgeon in New York City. He wanted to help African-American women with breast cancer gain access

to potentially life-saving healthcare. Navigators would help the women eliminate barriers to treatment in early-stage disease.

The first navigators were laypeople from Harlem who were sensitive to the cultural and language barriers in their community. Dr. Freeman's model harnessed people's energy and desire to help others. Today, the nurse and community navigator is a growing model that many organizations are implementing to assist people with their care needs, especially in underserved areas.

Using the oncology model, the following are some of the areas in which a nurse navigator can assist:

- Preparing the patient for the first visit with the oncologist to better understand what to expect
- Helping the patient understand their diagnosis and answer questions
- Expediting care where possible and overcoming various barriers by educating and referring to the various services that they need
- Greeting and introducing the patient to the care team and helping connect the dots in what can be a confusing system
- Following care through the cancer continuum

Nurse navigators seek to be champions for their patients, making sure they get what they need, when they need it, in the least restrictive setting.

The core competencies of an oncology nurse navigator include:

- Ability to prioritize and reprioritize quickly
- Strong organizational, leadership, and interpersonal skills
- Ability to develop collaborative relationships both internally and externally
- Strong verbal and written communication skills

- Ability to work in teams and autonomously
- Strong oncology knowledge
- Basic computer skills
- Basic knowledge of managed care
- Critical-thinking skills
- Working knowledge of insurance coverage and procedures
- Working knowledge of community resources
- Registered nurse license
- Oncology nursing experience
- Certification as an Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN®), Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse (AOCN®), Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner (AOCNP®), or Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Specialist (AOCNS®)

Nurse navigators can be used in other specialty areas as well to assist patients with chronic medical and behavioral conditions, as well as catastrophic injuries. The role is similar to that of a case manager or a patient advocate. Today, there are many names for nurse navigators in various healthcare specialties, but the common link among the roles is to improve the patient experience and maximize outcomes.

Resources

Oncology Nursing Society: The professional organization for nurses who specialize in oncology and oncology nurse navigation: <https://www.ons.org/about-ons/competencies>

Professional Patient Advocate Institute (PPAI): Offers two e-learning certificate programs—one for Independent Patient Advocates and another for Hospital Advocates. To learn more, visit www.patientadvocatetraining.com

National Association of Healthcare Consumer Advocacy: A member organization for patient advocates that includes nurse navigators. <http://nahac.memberlodge.com>

The Alliance of Professional Patient Advocates: A membership organization for patient advocates. To learn more visit <https://www.aphadvocates.org>

Certification for Nurse Navigators: Provides certifications for Oncology Nurse Navigator-Certified Generalist™ and Oncology Patient Navigator-Certified Generalist™. To learn more, visit <https://aonnonline.org/certification>

Nursing Informatics



Health information technology (IT) plays a critical role in supporting new models of care, as well as payment models designed to achieve healthcare's triple aim: improve health, improve the experience of care for patients and families, and reduce the cost of care. Due to their clinical knowledge and expertise in the healthcare system, some nurses have found a niche specialty in nursing informatics.

What is Nursing Informatics?

Nursing informatics integrates nursing science, computer science, and information science to manage and communicate data, information, knowledge, and wisdom in nursing practice.

Nurses in this specialty support physicians, pharmacists, other healthcare professionals, payers, patients, and caregivers in their decision-making across the broad care continuum. This support is accomplished through the use of information structures, information processes, and information technology.

Core competencies for nurses who work in this specialty:

- Understanding the nursing process
- Understanding patient care delivery workflow
- Analytics and critical thinking skills
- Knowledge of integration points for automated documentation
- Clinical practice experience
- Knowledge of technology and information systems
- Project management experience

Nurses in this specialty develop systems for communication and coordination of care with all clinical disciplines. They also ensure a coordinated process for discharge planning and transitions of care. In this manner, nurses and case managers are the coordinators of patient care.

The role of a nurses in this area can include:

- Administration, leadership, and management
- Analytics
- Compliance and integrity management
- Consultation
- Coordination, facilitation, and integration
- Educational and professional development
- Policy development and advocacy
- Research and evaluation

Advanced Education and National Certification

There are several advanced education programs that provide education for nurses who want specialize in this area:

The American Nursing Informatics Association: <https://www.ania.org>

HIMSS Certified Professional in Healthcare Information and Management Systems (CPHIMS) certificate: <http://himss.org/ASP/certificationHome.asp>

Resources

If you are interested in this specialty, visit the websites of these professional organizations to learn more about nursing informatics.

Alliance for Nursing Informatics: <http://www.allianceni.org>

American Nurses Association: <http://www.nursingworld.org>

HIMSS Nursing Informatics Community: <http://www.himss.org/ni>

American Medical Informatics Association: <http://www.amia.org/programs/working-groups/nursing-informatics>

Advanced Health Informatics Certification (AHIC): <https://www.amia.org/advanced-health-informatics-certification>

Nursing Management



As nurses mature in their careers, many consider moving into leadership positions. Nursing leadership and management requires proficiency and competence like any other clinical specialty.

Considerations for a Role in Nursing Management

Today, many organizations utilize a clinical ladder that describes the various roles available for nurses and the requirements needed for each level. Academic degrees are one of these requirements, so you may wish to consider further education to advance up the ladder. National certifications are another option to enhance your eligibility for leadership and management positions. Your organization may provide tuition reimbursement. Learn the requirements and what commitment is required in return for assistance.

Understanding the business side of healthcare is important as you progress in your nursing career. Management and nurse executives are under tremendous pressure to ensure their organizations meet clinical, regulatory, and financial requirements pertinent to healthcare. Many nurses choose to enroll in business programs to gain these competencies.

Communication is one of the most important skills for moving up the clinical and leadership ladder. As a manager and nurse leader, you must be able to clearly communicate your views to your supervisors, as well as convey business goals to your team so you gain their support and buy-in.

Leadership positions may expose you to public scrutiny. As a nurse manager, you will be the face of your organization. Be aware of how you act, what you say, and how you treat others both on and off the job. You will be held to a higher standard as you move up the organization's ladder.

As you consider a leadership position, share your goals with someone you trust. This helps you see yourself through another lens. Many people seek a mentor or a professional coach to share their career goals. You may obtain objective advice to understand your strengths and weaknesses and ways to enhance or improve each.

Seeking Opportunities

Today, many organizations are implementing programs to groom future leaders. Consider volunteering for a committee within your organization. If you see a need, form a committee to explore the issues and look for solutions.

If you belong to a professional organization, volunteer to help on a committee or in other areas of leadership. Read articles and join social networks that provide opportunities for you to share your expertise and grow professionally as a nurse.

Resources

Campaign for Action Coalitions: See how your state is working to implement the Future of Nursing recommendations for the nursing workforce. To learn more visit <https://campaignforaction.org/our-network/state-action-coalitions>

Occupational Health Nurse



Innovative strategies are being implemented in the workplace to improve the health and wellness of the U.S. workforce. To stem rising healthcare costs, employers are looking to occupational health nurses to assist employees, and in many times, their families. Improving safety to reduce workplace injuries and utilizing strategies to improve health and wellness to prevent chronic diseases is needed today more than ever before.

The roles for professionals who want to specialize in the area of occupational health are extremely diverse, covering any and all of the wide-ranging issues related to occupational health and safety. Occupational health nurses work as clinicians, educators, case managers, corporate directors, and consultants. They also have a broad array of responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- Disease management
- Environmental health
- Emergency preparedness/disaster planning
- Employee treatment, follow-up, and referrals
- Emergency care for job-related injuries and illnesses

- Gatekeeper for healthcare services
- Rehabilitation and return-to-work issues

Occupational health nurses counsel workers about work-related illnesses and injuries, as well as emotional issues and family problems if needed. They refer to employee assistance programs and other community resources to help the employee address challenges.

In addition, occupational health nurses develop health education and disease management programs that encourage workers to take responsibility for their own health. These include smoking cessation, exercise/fitness, nutrition and weight control, stress management, control of chronic illnesses and the effective use of medical services.

Many occupational health nurses also monitor the health status of workers, worker populations, and community groups. They conduct research on the effects of workplace exposures, gathering health and hazard data.

Organizations have good reason to hire occupational health nurses: These highly skilled health professionals help maximize employee productivity and reduce costs. They do so by effectively lowering disability claims, reducing on-the-job injuries and absenteeism, and improving employee health and safety.

Resources

The American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN): The professional organization dedicated to the education of nurses in the field of occupational nursing. If you are interested in this field, please visit their website to learn more at <http://www.aohn.org>

Oncology Nursing



If you or a member of your family is diagnosed with cancer, you will want a highly reliable team of professionals to explain the diagnosis, provide treatment options, and deliver the best available treatment. One of the key members of this team is the oncology nurse.

What Does an Oncology Nurse Do?

An oncology nurse provides care for cancer patients and those at risk for getting cancer. They monitor physical conditions, administer medication, chemotherapy, and other treatments in a variety of settings. Oncology is one of the most challenging and rewarding fields in nursing. No two days are ever the same, as each person handles the disease differently.

Oncology nurses integrate their clinical skills, scientific knowledge, and caring attitude to aid those living with cancer, including their families. Oncology nurses are with their patients from diagnosis, through treatment, and onto survivorship and/or end-of-life care.

What Role Do They Play?

Oncology nurses assume a variety of roles when caring for patients with cancer, from educating family members to administering treatment. As a result, nurses working with cancer patients should possess a broad range of skills to be effective in the workplace.

Oncology nurses work in various settings that include oncology departments in acute care hospitals, physicians' practices, or outpatient centers. Cancer can strike any person at any age, so oncology nurses can choose to work with adults or children.

The responsibilities of oncology nurses go beyond direct patient care, with focuses on research, management, consulting, education, and interventional radiology. They work hand-in-hand with physicians and other members of the healthcare team to ensure the greatest quality of care for each patient. The responsibilities and duties of an oncology nurse can include:

- Creating individualized care plans for patients under their supervision and care
- Recognizing and treating cancer-related symptoms
- Collaborating with a team of healthcare professionals to share expertise and knowledge
- Research to enhance treatment protocols assigned to cancer patients
- Providing supportive services and resources to the patient and the families to promote a positive outlook
- Teaching the patient and the family about treatment expectations
- Watching and recording the patient's progress on a constant basis
- Charting the patient's response to treatment and medication

Resources

If you are interested in this field, explore these sites to learn more:

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS): The largest professional organization for nurses specializing in this area. ONS provides education, sets standards, and supports nurses in the practice of oncology. <https://www.ons.org>

The Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC): Provides a certification process for nurses who have gained the expertise to qualify. Visit <http://www.oncc.org>

Palliative Care and Hospice Nursing



Palliative care and hospice nursing are growing specialty areas for nurses. Let's take a look at both.

Palliative Care

According to the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA), the goal of palliative care is to prevent and relieve suffering, support the best possible quality of life for patients and their families, and to assist with resources people need to manage their conditions.

Palliative care is both a philosophy of care and an organized, highly structured system for delivering care. Palliative care expands traditional disease-model medical treatments to include the goals of enhancing quality of life for the patient and family, optimizing function, helping with decision-making, and providing opportunities for personal growth.

Nurses come to this area of specialty with at least one year of acute care experience. They also should have excellent assessment skills, as well as clear and concise communications skills.

Both palliative and hospice care are provided using a team approach, and nurses are depended on heavily because they see the patient most. The interdisciplinary team relies on the nurse's assessment to make decisions for the plan of care. Both the care team and the patient's family need information that is timely, accurate, and, particularly for the family, easy to understand. As a result, nurses are often the eyes and ears of the team. Recognizing issues and reporting them promptly is important so the patient and family receive the benefits of palliative care.

Palliative care can be offered anywhere patients are seen, and in any stage of illness. Palliative care programs are found most often in hospitals, though there are programs in outpatient care and other areas as well.

Hospice Nursing

Hospice care, a part of palliative care, is provided to patients during the end stages of their disease process. Medicare regulations state that the patient must be thought to be in their last six months of life. Hospice care is provided in the patient's home, regardless of whether it is a private home, a personal care home, a skilled nursing facility, correctional facility, group home, or hospice-run residential facility. Inpatient hospice units in hospitals are also used to control symptoms so the patient can return home. Hospice care is focused on the patient and those who love them, wherever they reside.

No matter the setting, hospice care is provided by an interdisciplinary team that typically includes RNs, LP/VNs, nursing assistants, a social worker, a chaplain, volunteers, a pharmacist, and a medical director. The patient and family are also considered part of the team. Others, such as occupational or physical and speech therapists, may also be part of the team. The entire team works toward meeting the goals of the patient and family.

Nurses who see patients outside of the hospital are responsible for many duties. These include assessing the patient, delivering care, and organizing and managing a patient's plan of care. The plan of care may include

scheduled visits for nursing and nursing assistants, referrals to additional services and volunteers, ordering medications and durable medical equipment, and making calls to insurance companies and physicians when challenges arise.

Hospice nurses work in a variety of settings. As a result, there may be extensive travel and occasionally threatening environments, so hospice nurses should be aware of their personal safety. The work schedule can be unpredictable, as issues can arise at any hour.

Any level of RN can work as and be certified as a palliative care and hospice nurse. Palliative care and hospice nurses earn salaries comparable to other registered nurses. Nurses who hold advanced degrees specializing in palliative or hospice care usually receive salaries comparable to those of nurse practitioners.

Education

There is a distinct body of knowledge with direct application to the practice of hospice and palliative care nursing. This includes:

- pain and symptom management
- end-stage disease processes
- psychosocial, spiritual, and culturally sensitive care of patients and their families
- interdisciplinary collaborative practice
- loss and grief issues
- patient education and advocacy
- bereavement care; ethical and legal considerations
- communication skills
- awareness of community resources

There are fewer than 20 universities that offer graduate level education programs with a focus on hospice and palliative care. Some of those schools merely offer a few courses, while others offer enough classroom and clinical experience to earn a certification, specialization, minor degree or post-graduate certification in hospice and palliative care. All these programs fall under the auspices of master's level programs offering adult (ANP), pediatric (PNP), and doctoral (DNP) nurse practitioner education and training. There are currently two master's degree programs that focus specifically on hospice and palliative care, at New York University and Ursuline College.

Finally, to be a palliative care or hospice nurse, you must have the temperament and emotional stability for the job. It takes a great deal of self-assessment to be sure you can handle the patients and the families you will be providing for. A hospice nurse must be very patient and compassionate. When people are critically ill or facing death, they may not be easy to care for, as their own fears, worries, and illness outweigh everything else. A palliative care or hospice nurse must be able to encourage and provide comfort to not only their immediate client but to the client's family and friends as well.

Resources

Hospice and Palliative Nurse Association (HPNA): This professional organization offers continuing education courses as well as a career center. There is also certification credentialing in this specialty for all levels of nursing. Learn more at their website at <http://hpna.advancingexpertcare.org/>

New York University: <https://nursing.nyu.edu/academics>

Ursuline College: <http://www.ursuline.edu/Academics/Nursing/Graduate/tracks.html>

Risk Management



Risk management is an area in which nurses can specialize. In an effort to minimize potential losses, healthcare facilities hire healthcare risk management professionals to monitor and manage risks and liabilities. Risk managers work to ensure patient and staff safety, respond to claims of clinical malpractice, address patient complaints and grievances, and comply with federal and state regulations.

While their primary responsibility is to protect the hospital's interests, risk managers' efforts contribute significantly to the quality of patient care.

Nurses are a good fit for the role because they possess assessment skills, clinical skills to understand medical issues that arise, and communication skills to speak with physicians, healthcare professionals, hospital staff members, and patients and families who have been involved in an incident or injury.

Risk managers have a broad view of the healthcare system and are responsible for educating staff on the importance of reporting incidents when they occur. Risk managers receive all incident reports and begin an investigation with all parties involved if an incident results in an injury or a

suspicious event. The risk manager is responsible for gathering information before memories fade and to secure equipment that was involved.

If an incident involves a patient, the risk manager will speak with the patient and the family to address the incident. They also ensure the patient receives the care needed to address the incident and to mitigate problems.

Risk managers work with legal counsel to coordinate the processes involved in managing general liability and risk exposures for a hospital or healthcare facility. They are usually responsible for the oversight and direction of an organization's quality assurance programs, which involve medical staff peer reviews, patient care systems enhancements, quality improvement initiatives, and regulatory compliance.

Healthcare risk management professionals may be called on to perform the following duties:

- Investigate patient complaints and medical malpractice claims
- Review medical records for liability issues
- Conduct risk management training programs
- Research and report on medical and legal topics
- Examine financial and other records for instances of fraud or theft
- Manage lawsuits and act as a liaison for liability claims
- Review local, state, and federal laws
- Set reserves

In addition to clinical expertise, nurses who want to enter the field of risk management should possess the following:

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Proficiency in planning, coordinating, and implementing patient and staff safety procedures
- Good judgment and decision-making abilities

- Strong interpersonal, organizational, and customer service skills
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Interest in continuous learning and a commitment to stay informed on regulatory changes
- Talent for leading and facilitating group and team meetings
- Attention to detail and analytical skills
- Comfort in handling challenging situations that may involve adverse outcomes
- Ability to maintain a calm professional demeanor under pressure
- Education and training in risk management

Employers traditionally require a minimum of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing but may require a Master's of Science in Nursing. Candidates should also demonstrate proven leadership skills. Nurses seeking entry into the field of risk management can also benefit from legal training and seminars pertaining to healthcare risk management and regulatory compliance topics.

Resources

American Society for Healthcare Risk Management (ASHRM): www.ashrm.org

The Risk Management Society: www.rims.org

Telehealth Nursing



Any nurse who has spoken to a patient over the phone has practiced telehealth nursing. It is defined as the use of telehealth/telemedicine technology to deliver nursing care and conduct nursing practice remotely. Yet contrary to popular belief, it is not a new role. Advances in technology have only broadened the practice and allow nurses to see, monitor, and/or interact remotely with patients and their caregivers.

Telehealth nursing is not exactly a separate nursing specialty, as nurses in all settings employ some type of remote communication. An example is the use of audio and video to integrate data into their existing practice. This can help them become aware of gaps in care or challenges a patient or caregiver face. Combined with a body of knowledge, guidelines and competencies, nurses can successfully care for patients remotely.

Where Is Telehealth Nursing Practiced?

Telehealth nursing is being practiced in patients' homes, healthcare clinics, doctors' offices, prisons, hospitals, call centers, and mobile units. These systems allow nurses to monitor patients remotely for such concerns as blood pressure, oxygen levels, blood glucose levels, wound care,

and weight management. It is done via live video, phone, or Internet connections. Nurses work with patients to address problems proactively in order to avoid setbacks and exacerbations.

Telehealth is also used by call centers operated by managed care organizations. They are staffed by RN case managers who conduct patient triage and education. They also provide counseling to regulate patient access/flow, as well as to decrease ED visits or readmissions, especially for patients with chronic medical conditions. These cover conditions such as congestive heart failure, diabetes, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

This method of nursing is also being used in preventative medicine to help people change their behaviors to prevent chronic medical conditions.

Licensing and Certification

Nurses who work in telehealth may need additional licenses if they practice across state lines. If the nurse resides in one state, and the patient resides in another, the nurse may need a license to practice in both states. The Nursing Compact allows RNs to practice across member state lines if the state where the patient resides is part of the Compact. Today there are 24 states in the Nursing Compact with several states pending.

Patient confidentiality requirements and HIPAA regulations apply to professionals who work in the area of telehealth nursing. Privacy policies and informed patient consent guidelines remain the same as those for personal care.

As the U.S. healthcare environment continues to evolve—due to changes in reimbursement, legal issues, and shrinking healthcare resources—the role of telehealth nursing is expanding. This new model of care has emerged to ensure access to health and healthcare resources for all.

Resources

If you would like more information on telehealth, visit the American Telehealth Association website at <http://www.americantelemed.org>

To learn more about the Nursing Compact and the impact on nurses who work across state lines, visit the National Council of State Boards website at www.ncsbn.org/nlc.htm

Transplant Nursing



Healthy organs are essential to good overall health and proper functioning of the body. Medical problems affecting major organs in the body are often very severe and can be fatal. Because of medical advances during the last century, however, transplanting patients' unhealthy organs with healthy organs is common. Transplants save and improve quality of life for millions of people each year.

Safe and successful organ transplants require a very skilled team of professionals. One of the most important professionals on an organ transplant team is the transplant nurse. Other members of these teams include physicians, specialists, surgeons, and transplant coordinators. The transplant nurses, however, often have the most one-on-one contact with transplant patients.

Transplant nurses may work in general transplant surgery but can also choose to specialize. For instance, they may work specifically with cardiac patients or only with children in need of organ transplants.

Transplant nurses may work in the pre-transplant setting. Pre-transplant nurses first assess a patient to determine if he or she is a candidate for

a transplant. This task typically involves gathering the patient's medical records and following a protocol for diagnostic and blood and tissue testing. Armed with this information, a transplant team determines if a patient is a good candidate for organ transplantation.

Transplant nurses educate patients and their loved ones on the organ transplantation process. They teach patients how to care for themselves while they await an organ, and they explain how to get on the organ donation waiting list. Transplant nurses explain how the transplant waiting list works, what will happen if a matching organ is found, and what will happen during the procedure.

While transplant patients are waiting for an organ, they need a great deal of care. Transplant nurses work with the referring doctor to address issues that arise during the waiting period. The goal is for the patient to maintain optimal health so he or she is ready for a transplant when it is available.

In some cases, organs can be obtained from living donors. In this case, one transplant nurse works with the patient receiving the organ, while another nurse works with the donor. There are specific procedures to follow, and usually the transplant nurse is charged with ensuring the process stays on track.

When the transplant is complete, post-transplant nurses takes over. They follow their patients post-operatively to be sure the organ is functioning. Organ rejection is one of the greatest risks patients face after surgery, so post-transplant nurses educate patients about signs of rejection and the importance of taking their anti-rejection medications.

Skills Needed

Nurses generally come to transplant nursing after a few years as a medical-surgical nurse. Those who have surgical experience, surgical intensive care experience, or who have worked with patients who have undergone an

organ transplant do well in this field. Most transplant centers have specific educational requirements for transplant nurses.

Transplant nursing can be heart-wrenching at times. If you are pursuing a transplant nursing career, you must be able to cope with the death of your patients.

Resources

American Board for Transplant Certification (ABTC): Provides a national certification for those who specialize in this area. To learn more about transplant nursing and certification, visit ABTC's website at <http://abtc.net/>

To learn about the growth of this advanced practice in nursing, visit the Nurse Journal website at <http://nursejournal.org/transplant-nursing/transplant-nursing-careers-salary-outlook/>

Traveling Nursing



Healthcare professionals have a variety of options where they work. Most choose the conventional route and work in a hospital, rehabilitation center, or one of the many outpatient options that make up the broad healthcare continuum.

Another choice for those seeking adventure is to become a “traveler.” A traveler is a professional, usually a nurse, pharmacist, or therapist, who takes short-term assignments in locations worldwide. These assignments are provided by a staffing company that has contracted with organizations in need of temporary staff.

The length of assignments varies, but they usually last between three and six months. Healthcare organizations utilize travelers to fill temporary holes in staffing.

Professionals who do well as travelers are flexible, curious, and want to explore various sites across the country. Below are just five perks of being a traveling nurse.

- **Enter a new environment.** Being a traveler gives you the opportunity to travel to interesting areas of the country and the world. You will experience new cultures and meet new people while doing the work you were trained for.
- **Get to know a new community.** As a traveling nurse, you will visit engaging new places for extended periods of time. Unlike a vacation, when you only get a brief taste for an area, while temporarily living and working in a location you will learn much more about the culture and lifestyle. The best part is, you are also getting paid!
- **Utilize your skills.** Traveling nurses use their clinical skills in various organizations. Temporary assignments will test your ability to adapt and see your work through new lenses. You may bring fresh ideas to your latest position.
- **Meet new friends.** Fitting into a new work environment every few months can be a challenge. You must be secure in your own skin. You will also be away from family and friends for extended periods of time. Social media helps keep you connected, and with some planning, you can visit home from time to time. Family and friends can visit you, as well, and depending on where you are, you might get a lot of company!
- **Save money.** Some expenses will be covered in your contract, such as housing, health insurance, and other benefits offered by the staffing company. Before you accept an assignment, take time to learn what is offered and decide if the benefits will work for you. Being a traveler allows you to learn new models of care, experience nursing in various settings, and meet new people. If you are open to adventure, consider becoming a traveling nurse as you move to the next level in your career.

Resources

Questions to ask as you consider a traveling nurse assignment:

<https://www.travelnursing.com/news/career-development/10-questions-ask-before-your-next-travel-assignment>

http://journals.lww.com/nursing/Fulltext/2003/10001/Questions_travel_nurses_need_to_ask__Make_sure_you.4.aspx

Utilization Management



Traditionally, nurses who specialize in utilization management work behind the scenes to ensure the plan of care a patient receives meets evidence-based guidelines. By doing this, they ensure that the care being provided is based on evidence and is cost-effective.

Utilization management (UM) nurses work in hospitals, in managed care organizations, and in a multitude of provider settings.

Hospitals Utilization Management Nurses

Hospital UM nurses work to ensure the care provided in the hospital meets clinical guidelines so it is covered by the payer. Hence, they must be aware of the various types of insurance plans available to patients and what the plans cover.

UM nurses communicate closely with the managed care nurse, either in writing or verbally, with details on the patient's progress. They also provide information so the managed care nurse can ensure the patient is at the correct level of care for their condition.

They also work with the treating physician, specialists, and the treatment team to ensure documentation is in place to support the care given. Hospital UM nurses are tasked with making sure the documentation explains the care being provided and the patient's response. They communicate this information to the managed care nurse on an agreed-upon timeline.

The timely transmission of information is important so managed care organizations are aware of the plan and can approve or deny the care according to the guidelines. If information is not sent, the managed care organization can deny payment for the services rendered during the pre-certification process. This can happen concurrently, as care is being provided; or retrospectively, after the treatment has been provided. In addition, many hospitals now ask their UM nurses to aggressively address insurance denials as they come, to prevent financial loss.

Utilization Review Nurses in Managed Care Organizations

Managed care UM nurses receive information on patients from hospital UM nurses. They review the material against the clinical guidelines to ensure care is progressing according to the care plan.

If there is a discrepancy, or if the care does not meet criteria, the managed care utilization review nurse refers the case to the managed care medical director for a second opinion. If the medical director does not feel the length of stay is appropriate, or the orders do not meet evidence-based guidelines, a denial is issued.

It is important to remember that the managed care utilization review nurse does not deny care. He or she simply transmits the decision from the medical director to the hospital or provider.

When a denial occurs, there is an explanation as to why the denial was given, what guidelines were used, and how the issue can be corrected. The hospital and/or the provider have the opportunity at that point to provide

additional information to fill in the gaps. Many times, the treating physician will talk to the managed care medical director. Through this discussion, approval may be gained.

Managed care UM nurses must work closely with other providers to ensure each patient receives care that is grounded in evidence-based guidelines. It also ensures the care provided is delivered at the right time, in the least restrictive setting, and at the most affordable price. Utilization management nurses also work closely with case management professionals. When they see an issue that needs to be explored, coordinating with case management is important.

Today, with the high cost of healthcare, utilization management nurses must always ask why. The answers they receive help ensure care provided is safe, timely, and equitable for all consumers in the U.S. healthcare system.

Resources

American Board of Quality Alliance and Utilization Review Physicians:
<https://www.abqaurp.org>

Many of the national accreditation bodies have developed standards with specific time frames for utilization review decisions. These standards assure the consumer that the utilization process is fair and timely. The two major organizations that develop utilization management standards are URAC and NCQA.

URAC: www.urac.org

National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA): www.ncqa.org

I hope you have found this Special Report helpful as you look beyond the bedside. I will update this report as new opportunities arise. If you are aware of an emerging career in nursing, please email me at allewellyn48@gmail.com and I may include it in the next addition.



Opportunities await you as you move forward in your career. If you have questions or would like to talk about your career path, please feel free to email me, and we can set up a time to talk. Enjoy your career!

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