Why You Should Study an Online MSN Program

In nursing, there are many different roles and levels that you could work in. One of these is as a nurse practitioner (NP). These are highly skilled individuals that specialize in a certain area of nursing. In order to become an NP, you will need to have an MSN, and in some cases a DNP, too. If you are a practicing RN and are keen to take the next steps in your career, then this can be a key reason as to why you should study an online MSN program.





What is an online MSN program?

The MSN NP programs are designed to prepare you to work as an NP in your chosen field of nursing. They are BSN-MSN/NP degrees, and therefore one of the entry requirements is that you hold a BSN. MSN NP programs are for practicing RNs who want to study alongside their existing job and shift patterns. When undertaking MSN NP programs you will receive a high level of education in the technical areas of your chosen field, being able to prevent, treat, assess, and manage diseases. Alongside this, you will gain valuable experiences and skills that will help you thrive in your workplace and chosen role. Depending on the pathway you have chosen, the program can be completed in 24-30 months, as follows:

- Psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner degree: 28 months to complete
- Family nurse practitioner degree: 30 months to complete
- Pediatric nurse practitioner degree: 28 months to

complete

- Adult-gerontology, primary care, nurse practitioner degree: 24 months to complete

There are various courses that make up each program, including theoretical perspectives for advanced practice and moral and ethical decision-making. To make the programs more achievable and flexible, the courses can be completed following the 7-1-7 model, which means that you can take one course at a time. Each course takes 7 weeks, with a 1-week break in between.





Who are they aimed at?

The MSN NP programs are aimed at practicing RNs who already hold a BSN. This means that they have undergone training at bachelor level, and also passed the licensing exams for the state they are practicing in. If you are wanting to become a nurse, but are not yet at this stage, then it is still useful to consider what your future career and training options may be, so that you can prepare yourself and understand what might be expected of you in order to reach your ideal nursing role.





What skills do you need?

In order to be a nurse, you will need a combination of personal and professional skills. Nurse practitioners are healthcare professionals, and also educators, and provide medical and emotional support to patients and their families. If you are already an RN you will likely have many, if not all, of these qualities, but MSN NP programs can help teach you how to apply them to new situations that your new role may present to you. Some of the characteristics of a good nurse include:

Stamina

You will need both emotional and physical stamina when working as a nurse. Nurses can walk many miles in an average shift, and you will be lifting and moving machinery, equipment, and patients. Emotional stamina is important to keep you safe and

healthy, letting you make good boundaries and help prevent issues like compassion fatigue and burnout.





Compassion

This is the feeling of sympathy, combined with the desire to fix whatever is causing the patient pain or stress, and is a driving force behind many people wanting to become nurses.

Empathy

This is the ability to put yourself in the shoes of others in order to try and better understand their situation. When working as a nurse it is unlikely that you will have first-hand experience of every situation that you are presented with, and so empathy can help you imagine what your patients are going through.





Communication

You will be communicating with many different people every day, and therefore need to be able to speak, listen and observe, and understand when to adapt your communication techniques to suit the situation. As a large part of you work as an NP will focus on patient education, your communication skills will be incredibly useful in conveying medical information to those who do not have the same levels of training or understanding as you.

Teamwork

NPs often work as part of a larger medical team, and therefore collaboration skills are necessary to ensure that you work together to reach the best conclusion for your patients. Even though NPs can practice independently in some states, you will still be working alongside other medical professionals, or individuals involved with the patient such as social workers, and therefore teamwork skills are essential.

Willingness to learn

The medical industry is constantly changing and evolving, and you need to be willing to do the same. No matter how long you have been a nurse, or what your role is, the ability to learn and update your knowledge means that you will always be able to provide your patients with the most up-to-date treatment and care.





Advocacy

As an NP you will be an advocate for your patients, which means being able to speak for them if they cannot, and to make sure their rights are upheld and protected at all times.

When it comes to being an NP, you technical and personal skills will be used every day in order to provide the best care and support to your patients and their loved ones. Often, patients may be uncomfortable, scared, or stressed, and you will need to make them feel more at ease, as well as treating their various medical complaints.

What are the career outcomes?

The pathway you choose will determine your career outcome once you have completed the course. The higher the level of job, the more training and education are required. There is a lot

of room for career advancement and development within the nursing industry, and becoming an NP is one great way to begin this journey. The MSN NP programs train you to work as NPs in a specific area of nursing. For example:

Nurse Practitioner

NPs are different to RNs in many ways. NPs are mid-level practitioners who can perform many of the diagnostic and clinical functions of doctors, without being trained as one, and in some states can also practice independently. This makes them nonphysician clinicians. NPs have varied tasks and responsibilities, but one of their main functions is to promote patient wellness through education. The NP roles that msn np programs can train you to work in are:

Family nurse practitioner

FNPs treat patients across all ages, genders, body systems, and diseases, and their responsibilities can include:

- Prescribing medication
- Assessing patients
- Diagnosing patients
- Educating patients on their health
- Ordering and interpreting lab tests
- Managing patient treatment plans

Pediatric nurse practitioner

PNPs treat patients from birth to around 21 years old, and their responsibilities can include:

- Acting as a liaison between patients, families, and doctors
- Prescribing medication
- Maintaining patient health
- Performing physical and developmental assessments and check-ups

- Interpreting lab and diagnostic results
- Providing emotional support to patients and their families

Adult-gerontology, primary care, nurse practitioner

Primary care AGNPs treat patients from 21 years old and upwards, who are not usually ill, and their responsibilities may include:

- Assessing the competence of caregivers
- Educating patients
- Educating caregivers
- Encouraging healthy lifestyle choices
- Managing transitions between care settings

Psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner

PMHNPs can generalize or specialize in areas such as geriatrics, psychotherapy, and forensics, and their responsibilities may include:

- Prescribing and managing medications
- Assessing and diagnosing patients
- Consultancy
- Providing emergency psychiatric services
- Managing patient care
- Conducting therapy
- Educating families and staff

Once you have chosen your desired specialism, you can begin one of the MSN NP programs that will train you to work in this area. Following this, you will need to complete the licensing and certification exams to begin practicing, and you may even choose to undertake further education such as a DNP.





Why should you study online?

Online learning is very popular, and has many benefits regardless of the course you are studying. You may think that a career as hands-on as nursing would not suit distance learning. However, the MSN NP programs use blended learning, which is combination of distance learning and practical teaching methods. This makes the course incredibly flexible, and reduces excess travel and finances for you, while still providing the opportunity to put your learning into practice. The MSN NP programs are designed to be studied by RNs who want to be able to learn while still working. Here are some of the specific benefits of inline studying:

Soft Skills

When you are studying online, you can actually develop your personal skillset just through overcoming the challenges that come alongside distance learning, or by managing to balance your career and your course. Soft skills are non-technical, personal skills that are transferrable, and are looked upon favorably by employers. They include traits such as communication, conflict resolution, organization, and creativity, and many are particularly useful for nurses. The MSN NP programs can provide you with practical examples to give to employers, of times when you have used these skills in your daily life.

For example, nurses need to always be willing to learn and adapt to their environment. The medical industry is always changing and evolving, and you need to be prepared to do this too. This takes flexibility, adaptability, and creativity skills, as well as the desire to learn and absorb new information. Many of these are soft skills, and the process of working towards an MSN can show that you are keen and capable of learning, and are passionate about the field in which you are studying.

Finances

Being a student can be very expensive, with costs involving tuition fees, living costs, rent, and travel. This can be a factor in many people choosing not to pursue further education. The MSN NP programs can help you save money by reducing or removing some of these costs. When you do the majority of your learning from home, you don’t have to travel as frequently, or rent alternative accommodation. Furthermore, the MSN NP programs give you the ability to continue working and earning money alongside your program.

Furthering your education can also be a worthy long-term investment. It shows employers that you are serious about your career, and gives you the extra qualifications required to apply for more high-level jobs. These often come with higher salaries, so a master’s degree could increase your earning potential and the jobs available to you. You will also have access to opportunities that you may not be able to experience outside of your program, and will have the chance to meet people in the industry and network too.

Location

Being able to learn from your own home gives you more control over your learning environment and the pace at which you work. You can create a place in which to learn that fits your requirements and promotes productivity in a way that works for you. This can also help you enjoy the course, and feel more motivated to study. Furthermore, your local university may not offer the courses, qualifications, or types of study that you need in order to advance your nursing career. If this is the case, then you may have to delay or study another subject. When you learn online, your physical location is less of an issue, as you don’t have to regularly commute to classes.

Studying MSN NP programs provides you with a high level of education, preparing you to go on to work in advanced areas of nursing. You will grow both personally and professionally, while being able to work at a more manageable pace. Becoming

an NP is a rewarding career in which you can help many people, from individual patients to families and whole communities. If you are passionate about advancing your career and working in a specific field, then MSN NP programs can help you achieve this.

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