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## APRN: What Does it Stand For?

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## APRN: what does it stand for?

Stewart J

The American Nurses' Association (ANA) has advocated that all advanced practice nurses have one title, APRN. The various titles have been confusing for not only lay people, but also health professionals. Educational programs and requirements for advanced practice obviously are quite different, depending on what degree and certification one is aiming for.

The licensing for advanced practice nurses varies from state to state, as does prescriptive authority. In Connecticut, a nurse with a master's degree and specialty certification who takes a pharmacology course that meets the state's standards may apply for an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse license. This does not mean that all APRNs are nurse practitioners - in fact, the APRN could be a clinical nurse specialist, a certified nurse midwife, certified nurse anesthetist, or any other advanced practice area nurse. Certification exams are offered through the ANA and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, as well as other specialty organizations. One must meet stringent criteria to be able to take these certification exams. In Connecticut, a nurse must be certified by an approved organization in the specialty of the educational background obtained to get an APRN license.

So, not all APRNs are NPs, nor is the APRN the same title in all states! Confusing, yes, but feel free to just ask what certification an APRN has to clarify the specialty - we don't mind at all!

### ANA Definition of APRN

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) - APRNs hold a high level of expertise in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of complex responses of individuals, families or communities to actual or potential health problems, prevention of illness and injury, maintenance of wellness and provision of comfort. The APRN has a master's or doctoral degree concentrating in a specific area of advanced nursing practice, had supervised practice during graduate education and has ongoing clinical experiences. APRNs continue to perform many of the same interventions used in basic nursing practice. The difference in this practice relates to a greater depth of knowledge, a greater degree of synthesis of data and complexity of skills and interventions. APRNs include clinical nurses specialists, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse-midwives (ANA, 1996).

### More Patients Seeing Non-physician Clinicians Study Says

The proportion of patients seen by nonphysicians increased to 36.1% in 1997 from 30.6% in 1987, a trend fueled by the emergence of managed care and state legislation to expand the scope of practice for such clinicians according to report, "Trends in Care by Nonphysician Clinicians in the United States," posted in the January, 2003 issue of New England Journal of Medicine.

Go to: <http://www.nursingworld.org/news/ananeews.htm#nejm>

Look for information about psych-mental health APRNs in our June, 2003 issue of CNN.

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