

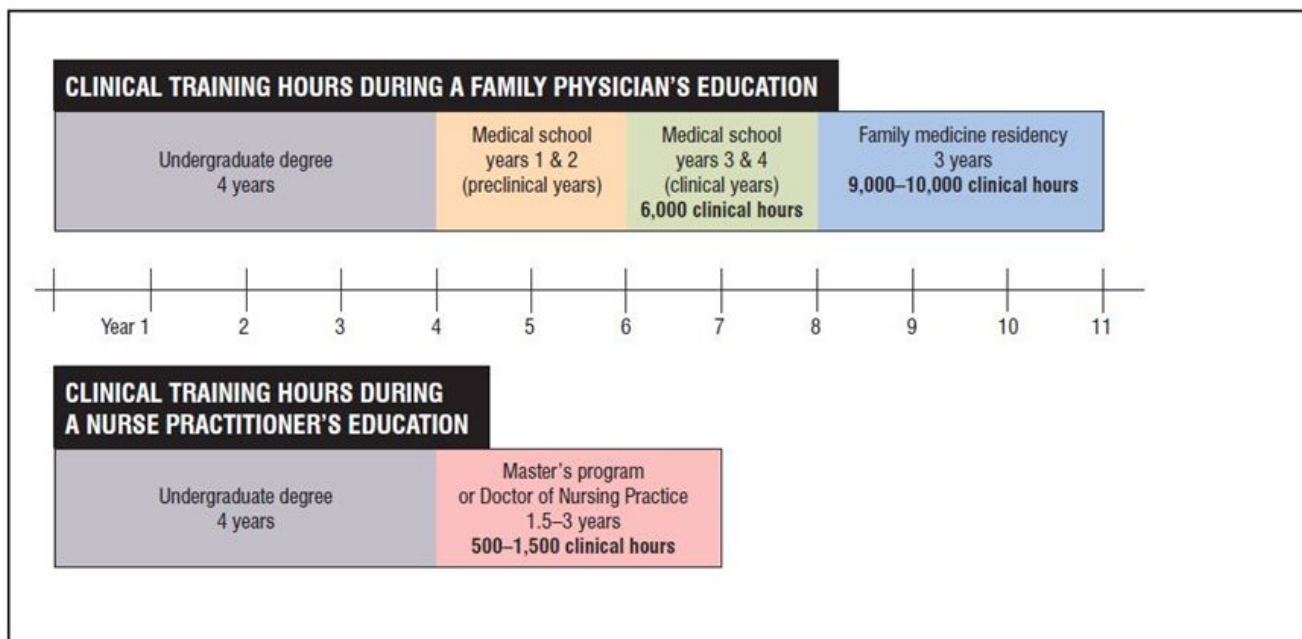


Scope of Practice Kit: What is a Nurse Practitioner?

Government Relations Division • 1133 Connecticut Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20036

The United States is adopting a new model of primary care built around patients, and nurse practitioners are an integral part of physician-led care teams that increase the quality and affordability of health care.

- Nurse Practitioners are required to complete 2 to 4 years of graduate-level education which includes between 500 and 1,500 clinical hours.



- Nurse practitioner training focuses on symptom identification, immunization, medication administration, and patient progress in recuperation or rehabilitation plans. Their knowledge and expert management in these areas makes them valuable members of physician-led health care teams.
- While nurse practitioners offer important primary care services, they are not necessarily a cost-effective solution for primary care shortages. Nurse practitioners handling more diagnosis will lead to medical malpractice cases against nurses and could result in more misdiagnoses. These costs will be passed on to consumers through higher insurance premiums and the need for redundant follow-up care.
- Adding more nurses will not guarantee better care. Primary care service areas with a ratio closest to one nurse practitioner for each family physician have the lowest costs, lowest hospitalizations, and the lowest avoidable hospitalizations. In service areas with more than one nurse practitioner for each family physician, data shows significantly higher costs and utilization of health care services.
- Primary care is a team effort, and adding more nurse practitioners to physician-led teams can contribute to the elimination of the primary care shortage.