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Where can nurses with a MSN work?



Working as a health care professional is incredibly rewarding – and not just because of the meaningful care you provide patients with. It is also an industry that offers a dynamic range of career opportunities.

There are many ways to advance your nursing career, with earning a master's degree being one of the most popular. According to the American Association of Colleges and Nurses, there are more than 330 master's degree programs accredited by either the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The Master of Science in Nursing – or M.S.N. degree – is included among the expansive program offerings.

What are the benefits of earning an MSN degree?

According to the AACN, the demand for nurses with master's and doctoral degrees is on the rise – including those for advanced practice, clinical specialties, teaching and research. The industry is going through a transformation and employers increasingly want nurses with graduate-level education backgrounds who are prepared to deliver and manage the growing complexity of today's health care services.

By earning a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree, you will be expanding the range of career opportunities to pursue, both in business and health administration. This type of education program allows nurses and graduate-level students to learn about different skills and concepts related to health care and explore various applications they may not have while earning a bachelor's degree, such as research, management and policy.

Furthermore, by earning an MSN degree, you will have more freedom and flexibility in deciding whether you want to work directly with patients administering care or indirectly, in a role more focused on researching, developing policy and programs, managing and leading nurses at lower levels, or educating health care students. You will also be able to choose a specialization of your choice depending on your field of interest, whether it is pediatrics, oncology, mental health or another area.

With a master's degree, you will also be in the position to potentially earn a higher salary than you would otherwise. According to Registerednurses.org, nurses with an MSN are some of the highest paid registered nurses in the field and are uniquely positioned to impact patient care in a capacity other health care professionals aren't able to.

Settings for MSN-level nurses

According to the AACN, although about 62 percent of employed registered nurses work in hospitals, there are growing opportunities and needs for nursing professionals to work in other settings, including:

- Home health care
- Outpatient clinics
- Public health agencies
- Nursing homes
- Schools
- Private practices

When you're a registered nurse, the settings you're able to work in are generally limited to practical health care settings such as hospitals. And while there is certainly nothing wrong with this, many RNs find that they eventually want to advance their career and explore other opportunities that allow them to work not only in a different type of facility, but in a new role with alternative responsibilities and functions. Obtaining an MSN degree provides that opportunity.

The type of setting you work in after graduating with an MSN degree will depend on your personal preferences and interests. For example, if you value autonomy, starting an independent practice may be a viable route for you to take. On the other hand, if you want to advance to a managerial level where you oversee a team of nurses, an MSN degree is necessary.

Advanced practice areas

When you become an advanced practice registered nurse, the setting you work in will largely be influenced by your area of specialization. Typically, it is one of the following:

- **Nurse Practitioner:** This role is one of the most popular for RNs with an MSN degree to have and they represent a large portion of the medical care community. NPs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat injuries and illnesses, and work in a wide range of settings, including hospitals, urgent care and long-term care facilities, nursing homes and private practices. NPs can also work at schools and universities to treat students who need medical attention.
- **Certified Nurse Midwife:** CNMs deal mostly with prenatal and gynecological care, working in hospitals, private homes, birthing centers and community health care centers.
- **Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist:** The job functions of a CNA revolve mainly around providing anesthesia to surgical patients, working in a variety of settings including hospital operating rooms, outpatient surgical centers and dentist offices.
- **Clinical Nurse Specialist:** These are centered around research regarding disease prevention and treatment and are often available in hospital and community health care facilities.

There are also a wide range of career opportunities you can pursue with an MSN degree that deal more with the business, leadership and management aspects of health care, rather than direct patient care. If those types of roles are of more interest to you, some of the possible career paths an MSN degree will prepare you for include:

- **Nurse Researcher:** In this role of a nurse scientist, you will have the unique opportunity of being able to participate in medical research and assist in the discovery and development of cures for illnesses and disease – whether that be with a private research firm, laboratory or pharmaceutical company.
- **Nurse Educator:** As a nurse educator, you could work at a school, college or health care facility teaching health care students. An MSN degree is also a necessary stepping stone if you're interested in earning a Ph.D. to teach at a university.
- **Clinical Nurse Leader:** CNLs play a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and safety of patient care is at its best. With this certification, you could work in hospitals, outpatient centers, nursing homes or other health care facilities – all settings where you would work with the administration to communicate, coordinate and monitor patient care.

If you already have a BSN degree or experience in the nursing field, you may already know which specialty or setting you prefer to work in. But, with so many options it can be hard to choose. Before you decide to pursue an MSN degree and specialization, it's important you consider your various strengths and career goals to help determine which program is exactly right for you and will provide you with the skills, experience and preparation needed to excel in your profession – and be able to work in the setting of your choice.

Generally, a full-time master's degree program could take about 18 to 24 months to complete. However, by earning an Online MSN degree, you will have more flexibility and will be able to continue to work as you advance your education.

Aside from a Ph.D., an MSN degree is the highest degree a registered nurse can earn. By pursuing a degree at the master's level, you will be able to influence and improve patient care – and the health care field in general – in the capacity, setting and role that is most meaningful and rewarding to you. It gives you the ability to take on more responsibilities and opens the door to further professional growth that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

There are many great aspects of being a registered nurse that allow you to do a wide variety of things in general health care settings. However, if there is a specific area of nursing you want to hone in on, enrolling in an Online Master of Science in Nursing Degree Program may be the way to make that happen.

Sources:

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