

## Difference in Education

Medicine and nursing are different disciplines. Education in one does not translate into expertise in the other.

Physicians receive a minimum of 15,000 hours of hands-on, supervised and accredited clinical training before they are legally permitted to care for patients independently. Nurse practitioners (NPs) are required to only complete 500-650 hours, and yet in 23 states and the VA, NPs are permitted to treat patients without physician supervision.

## “50 Years of Research”

Over the last 50 years, researchers found only 18 studies of adequate quality to compare nurse practitioners to physicians, and just 3 were performed in the US. The average duration of these studies was ten months and were designed for nurse practitioners to follow specific protocols (Cochr Db of Sys Rev, 2018). High-risk or complicated patients were almost always excluded.

No validated study has ever examined care provided by unsupervised nurse practitioners – research always allowed access to consultation with a physician.

## Access to Care

Non-physician practitioners do not go to rural areas to practice in greater numbers than physicians. States that have passed independent practice authority laws for nurse practitioners have NOT seen improved access to medical care.

Nurse practitioners are increasingly choosing to practice in specialty areas rather than primary care and can change specialties anytime without any special requirements. A physician who wants to change specialties has to do training in another residency program.

## Did you know?

Many nurse practitioner training programs now offer 100% acceptance rates, online curriculum, and accelerated programs allowing nurses to become NPs in under 2 years. Clinical hours are not standardized and may be on the “honor” system.

There are new “direct-to-NP” programs that allow students with a non-nursing bachelor’s degree (like art, history, or economics) to become an NP in about 3 years, with no nursing experience required.

## Physicians vs. Non-Physician Providers

Compared with physicians, studies show that nurse practitioners and physician assistants:

- Order more laboratory and radiology tests (JAMA Intern Med 2015)
- Prescribe more medications, including unnecessary antibiotics, psychotropic medications, and opioids (J Nursing Reg 2017)
- Have poorer quality of referrals to specialists (Mayo 2016)
- Perform more unnecessary skin biopsies (JAMA Derm 2014)

## Bedside Nursing Shortage

There is already a nursing shortage. The growth of nurse practitioner training has decreased the number of registered nurses, by 80,000 nationwide (Health Affairs 2020).

