Student Resource 9.6

Reference Sheets: Nursing

Registered Nurse (RN)

Pathway: Therapeutics

**Getting ready to go home**

Clarence was being discharged from the hospital. Holly made sure that Clarence understood the physician’s orders for home treatment, which had overwhelmed Clarence at first. “Thanks. Your support has meant a lot,” Clarence said.

**Providing patient support**

Holly is a registered nurse (RN). RNs provide patients with physical examination and treatment, education, and support. In a hospital, they may be responsible for making critical decisions about immediate actions that need to be taken. Like Holly, RNs teach patients about how to take care of their illness or injury after they leave the hospital. Often, they supervise licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and nurse aides. RNs work in almost all health care settings, from hospitals to schools to nursing homes.

With more education, RNs can become advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), which includes nurse practitioners (NPs), who work as primary care providers; certified nurse-midwifes (CNMs), who provide gynecological and obstetrical care; clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), who handle a wide range of physical and mental problems; and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNA), who administer anesthetics.

**Qualities and skills**

Like Clarence, the general feeling that many patients have about their medical care is based on their interactions with RNs. RNs are usually pleasant, positive, and trustworthy, and their work is often openly appreciated by patients. Since they supervise other members of the nursing staff, they must have leadership skills. They must be able to concentrate on critical tasks, even in stressful situations, and they must be able to carefully follow procedures to protect themselves and others against disease and injury.

**I’ve always dreamed of being a nurse. What do I have to do to make it happen?**

Community colleges offer two-year nursing education programs, and hospitals offer three-year programs. Colleges and universities offer four-year programs. Graduates of these four-year programs receive a BSN, or a bachelor of science in nursing. RNs must pass a written exam issued by the state board of nursing and receive state registration. Advanced practice nurses need a BSN and a master’s degree. According to the US Department of Labor in 2010, the mean annual wage was $67,720.

**How can I prepare now?**

Look for volunteer work at a hospital or medical center; find a nurse who is willing to act as a mentor and help you make college and career choices.

Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)

Pathway: Therapeutics

**An unfortunate accident**

A drunk driver had smashed into the van that Julia was driving. It was a serious accident, and Julia had multiple wounds. At scheduled intervals, Jacob checked Julia’s vitals. He cleaned and dressed her wounds. Jacob took detailed notes on Julia’s progress to show the RN and Julia’s doctor. With each visit, he asked Julia how she was doing and gave her encouraging words of support.

**Bedside care**

Jacob is an LPN. Like RNs, LPNs provide bedside care and support to patients in a variety of health care settings. LPNs, however, have fewer responsibilities than RNs, and their education and training is more limited. Their responsibilities include giving physical care, taking vital signs, giving medication, and dressing wounds. They prepare patients for exams. They take clear and descriptive notes about a patient’s condition, and they report that information to their supervisor, who is usually an RN or physician.

**Qualities and skills**

Like RNs, LPNs are clear thinkers with positive attitudes who can work productively under stressful conditions. They must be able to handle working with patients who might be agitated or in pain. Their work can be physically demanding. For example, they may need to move patients, so they must follow protocol to protect themselves from back injury and patients from further injury. According to the US Department of Labor in 2010, the mean annual wage was $41,360.

**I think this would be the perfect career for me. What do I have to do to make it happen?**

LPNs complete a one-year program after high school. LPN programs are offered by hospitals, technical colleges, city school systems, and community colleges. After completing the program, students must pass a written exam issued by the state board of nursing and obtain a state license that must be renewed every two years.

**How can I prepare now?**

Like all health care careers, focus on your science courses. Also, consider volunteering or getting a summer job in a health care setting, like a nursing home.

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

Pathway: Therapeutics

**Caring for the elderly**

Bihn gingerly helped Mr. Kim into his robe and slippers. Then he carefully helped him out of bed and into the wheelchair. Bihn wheeled Mr. Kim into the rec room and turned on Mr. Kim’s favorite talk radio program. Mr. Kim patted Bihn’s hand and thanked him.

**Providing basic needs**

Bihn is a CNA. CNAs provide care that covers a patient’s basic needs, which include hygiene, comfort, and nourishment. Their daily tasks may include changing bed linens, transporting patients, taking vital signs, and bathing and feeding patients. They monitor patients and report changes in patient’s behavior or well-being to the RN in charge. In nursing homes, CNAs may be the main caregiver.

**Qualities and skills**

CNAs are often working with patients who may be irritable or uncooperative. Also, they often perform unpleasant tasks, such as changing soiled linens or emptying bedpans, so CNAs must be tolerant and compassionate people. Their work can also be physically demanding. They may be on their feet for most of their work day and be required to lift patients. Like LPNs and RNs, their work can be very rewarding because they are often caring for people who greatly appreciate their work.

**I think this would be a great career for me. What do I have to do to make it happen?**

CNAs must complete a four-month certificate program. They must also pass a written and practical exam issued by the state. CNA programs are offered in vocational and technical schools. According to the US Department of Labor, the mean annual wage was $25,140.

**How can I prepare now?**

Make contact with a CNA and ask about the specific challenges and highlights of that person’s job. Consider if it is a career that would be a good fit for you.

Student Resource 9.7

Comparison: Nursing Careers

Student Names:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Use the information you find on the nursing reference sheets (Student Resource 9.6) to complete the chart. Then use the information in the chart to answer the questions below.

|  | RN | LPN | CNA |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Years of education required after high school |  |  |  |
| Salary |  |  |  |
| Responsibilities and specific duties |  |  |  |
| Personal characteristics |  |  |  |
| Direct supervisor |  |  |  |

1. Explain the connection between the amount of education required for a nursing profession and the salary that profession earns.
2. What are two things that all three professions have in common?
3. Which nursing career requires the most education, earns the highest salary, and has the most responsibilities? Which requires the least? In your notebook, draw a graph or chart that depicts the difference in education, salary, and responsibilities of an RN, LPN, and CNA.