



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALISTS

ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES The Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS)

Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) are licensed registered nurses who have graduate preparation (Master's or Doctorate) in nursing as a Clinical Nurse Specialist.

What type of clinical practice would you find CNSs?

CNSs are expert clinicians that work in a wide variety of clinical practice areas. Generally, their practice is specialized in a clinical area that may be identified in terms of a:

- **Population** (e.g. pediatrics, geriatrics, women's health)
- **Setting** (e.g. critical care, emergency room)
- **Disease or Medical Subspecialty** (e.g. diabetes, oncology)
- **Type of Care** (e.g. psychiatric, rehabilitation)
- **Type of Problem** (e.g. pain, wounds, stress)

According to the 2010 NACNS survey, over 70% of CNSs work with adult patients from the age of 19- 85 years of age. About 1/3 of 2010 NACNS respondents noted that they worked in some form of adult acute and critical care clinical practice. Gerontology, Oncology, Cardiovascular, Diabetic, Psychiatric Mental Health clinical areas were additional common clinical care specialties identified.

Where do CNSs work?

CNSs practice in a wide variety of health care settings. According to the 2010 NACNS survey approximately 70% of CNSs work in some type of inpatient hospital setting. The remainder of CNSs indicated clinical locations that range from Home Health Care, Long Term Care/Nursing Homes, Public Health Centers and Ambulatory Care.

How do CNSs contribute to improved clinical outcomes?

The CNS improves clinical outcomes in a number of ways. In addition to providing direct patient care, the CNS improves patient outcomes through expert consultation, care coordination, monitoring quality indicators and expert communication between the health care team and family. In addition, CNSs work on a macro level within their health care system to implement improvements in patient care that improves outcomes for categories of patients. One example of this would be the implementation of clinical assessment tools to reduce falls or increase pain management for post surgical patients.

How many CNSs are there?

An estimated 72,521 RNs have the education and credentials to practice as a clinical nurse specialist (CNS). Approximately 14,689 are prepared as both a nurse practitioner and a CNS. (HRSA, March 2004 National Sample Survey of RNs)

Do CNSs have prescriptive authority?

States vary in their laws permitting CNSs prescriptive authority. CNSs can provide expert care and consultation without prescriptive authority, though over 70% of CNSs responded to the 2010 NACNS survey that if they had prescriptive authority, they would prescribe medications in their clinical practice.