

# Discover



# Nephrology Nursing

**ANNA**

American Nephrology Nurses' Association  
[www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org)



*Achieve your goals  
Make a difference  
Join a community of caring*

Become a  
nephrology nurse.

# The American Nephrology Nurses' Association



*Advocacy. Scholarship. Excellence.*

## *Mission Statement*

ANNA will advance nephrology nursing practice and positively influence outcomes for individuals with kidney disease through advocacy, scholarship, and excellence.

**American Nephrology Nurses' Association**

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East Holly Avenue, Box 56 • Pitman, New Jersey 08071-0056

# Your career is your choice...

## ANNA is here to help.

Nephrology nursing is a dynamic, diverse, and holistic practice. For more than four decades, the specialty has grown in scope and numbers.

Nephrology nurses work in a team-oriented environment, using their nursing skills and knowledge to make independent decisions. They care for patients of all ages who are experiencing, or are at risk for, kidney disease.

The broad scope of nephrology nursing practice is what makes the specialty both challenging and rewarding.

**ANNA's mission** is to advance the specialty and nurture every ANNA member. We achieve these goals by providing the highest quality educational products, programs, and services. Our members are leaders who advocate for patients, mentor each other, and lobby legislators, all to inspire excellence.



## If you are a...

- **Nursing student eager for a rewarding career that enhances your nursing skills**
- **Medical-surgical nurse who enjoys specialized patient care**
- **Nurse in another practice setting looking for a change**

...nephrology nursing  
is perfect for you.



*“The specialty offers a brilliant blend of the art and science of nursing, from electrolytes and hemoglobin to compassion and care.”*

Loretta Jackson Brown, MSN, RN, CNN  
Chief Nurse, U.S. Air Force Reserves  
Lawrenceville, GA

# Nephrology Nursing Practice

## Definition

Nephrology nursing involves both preventing disease and assessing the health needs of patients and families.

Care spans the life cycle and involves patients who are experiencing the real or threatened impact of acute or chronic kidney failure. These patients need well-educated, highly skilled, motivated registered nurses.

Educational and technological advances make it a dynamic field, rich with a wide variety of career opportunities for a new graduate or experienced practitioner.

## History

Nephrology nursing has been recognized as a specialty for over 40 years. In 1973, treatment for end stage kidney disease by hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or transplantation was funded by the federal government and became more readily available.

Since then, the role of the nephrology nurse has greatly expanded and practice boundaries broadened.

## Knowledge Base

To provide optimum care tailored to each patient's needs, nephrology nurses' knowledge and skills have evolved, along with specialized areas of practice. For example, there are nephrology nurses who are trained and educated to care for patients in different age groups: pediatric, adult, and geriatric.

The nurses' skills also relate to specific modalities of therapy including:

- Hemodialysis
- Peritoneal dialysis
- Transplantation
- Continuous renal replacement therapy
- Conservative management
- Other extracorporeal therapies

Nephrology nursing practice overlaps the boundaries of other specialty areas. For example, transplant nurses now care for patients who receive multi-organ transplants. This diversity is one of the most appealing aspects to practitioners.

# Evolving and Expanding Roles



*“Nephrology nursing provides a career of challenges as well as expansive, diverse opportunities.”*

Carol M. Headley, DNSc, RN, CNN  
Nephrology APN  
Memphis, TN

## Roles of the Nephrology Nurse

- Staff nurse, hospital or outpatient settings
- Hemodialysis/peritoneal dialysis nurse
- Nurse manager
- Transplant coordinator
- Organ recovery coordinator
- Office nurse
- Nurse practitioner
- Clinical nurse specialist
- Pharmaceutical representative
- Nurse researcher
- Quality management
- Nurse educator
- Corporate/sales
- State or federal surveyor

## Opportunities

Nephrology nursing positions are available in dialysis clinics, hospitals, physician practices, transplant programs, and many other settings.

## Standards of Practice

Practice is guided by the **ANNA Nephrology Nursing Standards of Practice and Guidelines for Care** and **ANNA Scope and Standards of Advanced Practice in Nephrology Nursing** ([www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org), “Publications”).

## Resources

ANNA helps support the wide variety of nephrology nursing roles through many of its publications including the **Core Curriculum for Nephrology Nursing** and **Contemporary Nephrology Nursing: Principles and Practice**.

## Certification

Nephrology nursing certification recognizes an individual's expertise in the specialty. Certification can be achieved through the Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission ([www.nncc-exam.org](http://www.nncc-exam.org)).

# Incidence

People of all ages, socioeconomic groups, and races may develop some form of kidney disease. The disease varies in severity, but when kidneys lose 85% or more of their ability to function, the condition is known as end stage renal disease (ESRD). At this point, the kidneys are no longer removing waste products of metabolism and excess fluids, balancing electrolytes, or regulating hormones compatible with life.

When patients reach ESRD, they must receive replacement therapy either in the form of dialysis or kidney transplant in order to survive.

At the end of 2006, there were more than 500,000 people with ESRD. Of these, 70% were on dialysis. (Source: *United States Renal Data System [USRDS] 2008 Annual Data Report*)

Kidney transplant is a treatment option for many ESRD patients, with 18,000 transplants performed in 2006, an increase of 3.5% from 2005 (USRDS, 2008). However, the need for donor organs far exceeds the supply and results in long waiting times for those who do not have a donor.



## Medicare Coverage

*One of the most significant factors influencing the growth of nephrology nursing was the 1973 extension of Medicare to cover treatment of kidney failure. This helps pay the costs for dialysis or transplantation, regardless of the patient's age.*

## Patient Data

- **Approximately 27 million American adults have chronic kidney disease (CKD) and millions more are at increased risk.**
- **More men than women, more elderly than young, and more African Americans and Hispanics than Caucasians develop CKD.**
- **The annual total cost for ESRD in the U.S. is \$33.6 billion.**
- **The number of people diagnosed with kidney failure has doubled each decade for the last 2 decades and will likely continue to do so.**

*(Sources: U.S. Renal Data System 2008 Annual Report; National Kidney Disease Education Program; National Kidney Foundation)*

# Patients and Settings

## Populations

Patients include pediatric, adult, and geriatric individuals from a variety of ethnic groups. They have acute or chronic kidney failure, or are at risk for kidney disease.

Care may be extremely complex: patients may have various comorbid conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, infectious disease, bone disease, or drug addiction. In addition, many face psychosocial issues. Patients learn to cope with these problems over time, especially with the help of a skilled and compassionate health care team.

The nurse's role is to help patients manage their lives while effectively dealing with their health issues.

## Practice Areas

Nephrology nursing practice occurs in primary, secondary, and tertiary care settings and in the home – wherever individuals are experiencing or are at risk for kidney disease.

## Conservative Management

Not all patients with kidney disease require dialysis. Some diseases that affect the kidneys are treatable and potentially curable. In these cases, one of the nephrology nurse's primary roles is to educate patients about their diseases, prognoses, and treatments. Nurses also work with patients to prevent progression of their kidney disease.

## Inpatient Setting

- Patients often critically ill
- Fast-paced practice
- Challenging

## Outpatient Setting

- Care of complex patients
- Nurse is integral member of a multidisciplinary team
- Long-term care of chronically ill patients
- Nurse is advocate, educator, consultant, direct caregiver
- Nurses can have a positive impact on the quality of patients' lives

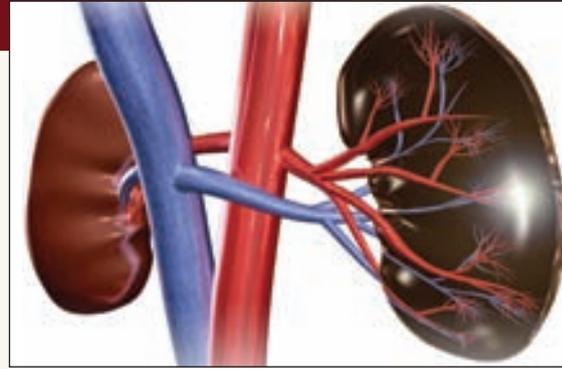


*“Nephrology nurses develop long-term relationships with patients and their families. We really make a difference in their lives.”*

Nancy Pierce, BSN, RN, CNN  
Dialysis Director  
Helena, MT

# Treatment Modalities

***Nephrology nurses work with all treatment modalities for kidney disease.***



## Hemodialysis

Hemodialysis removes accumulated metabolic waste products from the blood using an artificial kidney. Hemodialysis is considered a life-sustaining treatment for acute and chronic kidney failure.

The nephrology nurse in a hemodialysis setting:

- Works within a standardized protocol.
- Functions as educator, direct caregiver, and coordinator.
- Cares for chronic kidney failure patients on a long-term basis.
- Assesses patients for signs of fluid and electrolyte imbalance.
- Uses a general knowledge base of medical-surgical, pediatric, geriatric, and psychiatric nursing.
- Must have technical knowledge of dialysis equipment and good communication skills.

## Peritoneal Dialysis (PD)

Like hemodialysis, PD removes metabolic waste from the blood. Primarily a self-care option, PD patients manage their own treatment via a flexible, permanent, indwelling catheter. The peritoneum serves as the dialysis membrane. PD is used to treat both acute and chronic kidney failure.

The nephrology nurse in a PD setting:

- Performs physical assessments.
- Collaborates with the medical team and the patient to manage clinical, nutritional, and psychosocial needs.
- Analyzes monthly laboratory tests.
- Teaches patient and family to perform PD at home.
- Must have good assessment skills to evaluate education needs and assess response to dialysis therapy.

## Renal Transplant

Patients who meet the medical criteria may choose kidney transplantation. With the new immunosuppressive medications, transplant is now a very successful therapy. The problem continues to be the shortage of available donor organs.

The nephrology nurse in a transplant setting:

- Has a varied and extensive role that requires continuous education and clinical training.
- May function as a staff nurse, transplant or organ recovery coordinator.
- Uses the nursing process to meet the unique needs of transplant recipients and living donors.
- Monitors patients for rejection, infection, and other complications.

# Career Opportunities In Nephrology Nursing

## Education

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There are many options available for nurses pursuing a career in nephrology education. In the work setting, the educator is a valuable resource as a coach for new staff or for nurses in other disciplines. In the academic setting, educators may choose to teach basic nursing, master's, or doctoral level programs.

## Management

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Strong leaders and skilled communicators are ideal for the many management and administrative positions now available. Superior patient care skills are needed, and most settings prefer a BSN or advanced degree. The role is challenging, evolving, and exciting.

## Research

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A data-driven society and the goal of evidence-based quality care has broadened this area for nephrology nurses. To help improve nephrology treatments and support advances in practice, ANNA has joined other corporations to make funds available for nephrology nursing research.

## Advanced Practice Nursing

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Advanced practice nurses (APNs) in nephrology include clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) and nurse practitioners (NPs). The APN provides care for patients along the continuum of kidney disease and in all treatment modalities. Both the CNS and NP roles are utilized in the inpatient and outpatient settings with the nurses working as clinicians, consultants, educators, and researchers.



***ANNA  
members are  
political  
advocates and  
leaders in the  
workplace and  
community.***

## Case Management

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The nephrology nurse case manager oversees the quality, outcome, and cost of patient care. Patient advocacy and continuity of care are two vital components of this role.

## Corporate/Government

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Corporate employers include national and international manufacturers and distributors of dialysis and related equipment, as well as pharmaceutical companies. In government settings, nurses may find work at the local, state, or federal levels.

## Pediatric Nephrology

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This is a growing and fulfilling subspecialty, with pediatric nephrology nurses practicing in all treatment modalities.



*We welcome you* to join our caring community. Visit [www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org) to learn more.

## About ANNA

Since it was established as a nonprofit organization in 1969, the American Nephrology Nurses' Association (ANNA) has been serving members who span the nephrology nursing spectrum.

ANNA has a membership of over 12,000 registered nurses and other health care professionals at all levels of practice. Members work in such areas as conservative management, peritoneal dialysis, hemodialysis, continuous renal replacement therapies, transplantation, industry, and government/regulatory agencies.

Because ANNA offers programs to mentor newcomers and develop leaders, the association has been extremely successful in helping members attain their goals.

ANNA serves its members through a national structure separated into four regions. Within these regions are over 100 local chapters. The association also offers top quality education services, products, conferences, and programs. State-of-the-art technology provides networking opportunities and supports a vast array of member services and resources on the Web site, [www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org).

## ANNA Member Benefits

- *Nephrology Nursing Journal* (bimonthly)
- *ANNA Update* newsletter (bimonthly)
- ANNA E-News (monthly)
- ANNA's RenalWEB Biweekly *Nephrology Nursing News*
- Top-quality education programs
- Awards, scholarships, and grants
- Leadership training and development
- Health policy representation
- Professional resources and publications
- ANNA Resource Corps – volunteer network
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Web site and Internet community
- Online continuing nursing education (ANNA's Online Library)
- Networking through local chapters
- ANNA Connected – Social and Professional Networking
- Professional liability insurance (through Nurses Service Organization)
- Discounts for programs and publications

# Become a member

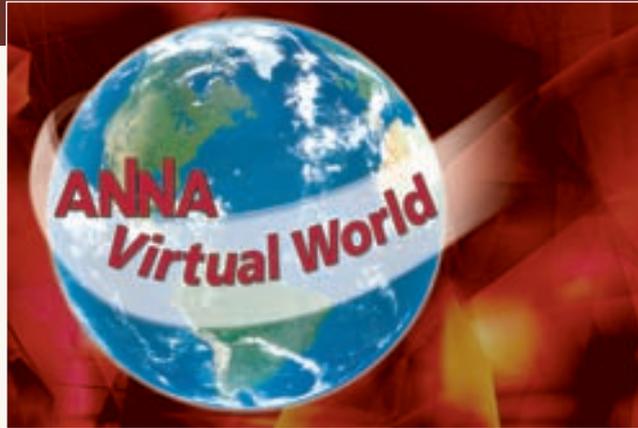
## Membership Categories

- **Active member:**  
Any registered nurse licensed in the United States, Canada, or Mexico who is interested in the care of nephrology patients is eligible for active membership.
- **Associate member:**  
LP/VNs, technicians, and others interested in nephrology are welcome to join as associate members.
- **International member:**  
International membership is available to registered nurses living outside of North America.
- **Student member:**  
Students are invited to join at a special reduced membership rate.

More details:

[www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org)

“Join ANNA or Renew.”



## Fast-track Your Education and Professional Growth

*ANNA Virtual World.* The Virtual World includes three resources:

- ANNA's Web site, [www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org)
- ANNA Connected, social and professional networking for members accessed via ANNA's Web site.
- ANNA's Online Library, a vast array of online education available at [www.prolibraries.com/anna](http://www.prolibraries.com/anna).

*Publications.* As a member, you'll receive *Nephrology Nursing Journal* (NNJ), the association's official publication. This bimonthly peer-reviewed journal contains original articles, research, special features, and editorials. You'll also receive *ANNA Update* newsletter, ANNA E-news, and other special publications.

*Programs and Resources.* You'll learn the latest practice advances at ANNA's **National Symposium** and **Fall Meeting for Nephrology Nurses, Managers, and Advanced Practice Nurses**. There are also health policy and leadership workshops; audio conferences; an extensive online library; and numerous chapter programs.

## How to join:

### 1. Apply Online

*The fastest and easiest way to join!*

Visit [www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org) and complete the online membership application.

### 2. Download Printable Form

Visit [www.annanurse.org](http://www.annanurse.org) and download a PDF of the membership application. Complete the information, enclose your payment, and mail as instructed.



Questions?

We're here to help! Call ANNA at 888-600-ANNA (2662) or e-mail [anna@ajj.com](mailto:anna@ajj.com).



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