



MEDICAL CAREERS

Have you ever wondered what the difference is between medical careers? There are multiple routes one can take, each with their best fit for the career and lifestyle you want to have. We break down 3 common paths, their similarities, differences, and more.



NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct health care profession that combines the wisdom of nature with the rigors of modern science. Naturopathic doctors (ND) are trained as primary care providers who diagnose, treat and manage patients with acute and chronic conditions, while addressing disease and dysfunction at the level of body, mind and spirit.

MEDICAL/OSTEOPATHIC DOCTOR

Medical doctors (MD/DO) are a physician, specialist or surgeon who takes a biological approach to healing. Their education is disease specific. They utilize various techniques and tests to diagnose a patient's symptoms and develop a treatment plan to address the disease.

NURSE PRACTITIONER

Nurse Practitioners (NP) are advanced practice nurses. As clinicians they blend clinical expertise in diagnosing and treating health conditions with an added emphasis on disease prevention and health management, NPs bring a comprehensive perspective and personal touch to health care.



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ND, MD/DO, NP: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

PRIMARY CARE TRAINING

REQUIREMENTS/ COURSEWORK

WORK ENVIRONMENTS

	ND	MD/ DO	NP
Medical Assessment and Diagnosis	✓	✓	✓
Patient Management	✓	✓	✓
Communication and Collaboration [Leadership and Health Delivery System Competencies]	✓	✓	✓
Professionalism	✓	✓	✓
Career Development and Practice Management	✓	✓	✓
Systems-based Practice	✓	✓	✓
Practice-based Learning, Research and Scholarship	✓	✓	✓

	ND	MD/ DO	NP
Years of Undergraduate Medical Education	4	4	4
Two Years of Classroom Instruction	✓	✓	✓
Average Credits First Two Years	191	91	136 ¹
Minimum Hours of Clinical training/Clerkship (before residency)	1200 ²	1760	1000 ³ 1364
Department of Education Accreditation Recognition	✓	✓	✓
Biomedical sciences (anatomy, biochemistry, neuroanatomy, embryology, histology, pharmacology)	✓	✓	✓
Pharmaceutical Training	✓	✓	✓
Clinical Judgment/ Problem-Solving Skills	✓	✓	✓
Cultural Competence and Health Care Disparities/Societal Problems	✓	✓	✓
Medical Ethics	✓	✓	✓
Communication and Interprofessional Collaboration	✓	✓	✓
Scientific Method/ Clinical Research	✓	✓	✓
Years in Residency Training	1-3 Optional	3	None ⁴
Lifestyle Counseling	✓		
Botanical Medicine	✓		
Physical Medicine and Hydrotherapy	✓	★ ⁵	
Nutrition	100-220 Hours	0-70 ⁶ Hours	10-19 ⁷ Hours

	ND	MD/ DO	NP
Interprofessional Outpatient Clinics	✓	✓	✓
Concierge or Telemedicine Practice	✓	✓	✓
Non-profit and Underserved Community Clinics	✓	✓	✓
Administration	✓	✓	✓
Research	✓	✓	✓
Academia/Education	✓	✓	✓
Supplement and Natural Products Industry	✓	✓	✓
Entrepreneurship/Private Business	✓	✓	✓
Hospitals	★ ⁸	✓	✓
Pharmaceutical Industry		✓	✓

- 1 Reflects NP didactic education spread throughout education years per California requirements, 270 credit hours over four years = 67.5 hours per year.
- 2 Minimum hours for the median osteopathic college clerkship per 2018-2019 Weeks of Clinical Clerkship Hours by Osteopathic Medical College from AACOM. There are no minimum clerkship types, weeks or hours required for accreditation of a medical school by LCME or AACOM. LCME does not report on weeks of clerkship per medical school.
- 3 Includes clinical hours from required registered nursing training. Clinical hours for NPs vary, 500 hours is the minimum requirement.
- 4 NP specialization occurs during education tracks
- 5 Includes Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine only
- 6 Overall, medical students received 19.6 contact hours of nutrition instruction during their medical school careers (range: 0-70 hours); the average in 2004 was 22.3 hours.
- 7 Majority of NP programs with 10 to 19 clock hours of nutrition education
- 8 Most NDs practice in outpatient settings, however there are some instances of NDs being employed in hospital settings

References: LCME Functions and Structure of a Medical School (2021-2022) | <https://lcme.org/publications/Standards> | CNME Accreditation Handbook (2020) | <https://cnme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CNME-Accreditation-Handbook.pdf> | AACOM Reports on Curriculum (2018-2019) | <https://www.aacom.org/reports-programs-initiatives/aacom-reports/curriculum> | Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs (2016) | <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nonpf.org/resource/resmgr/Docs/EvalCriteria2016Final.pdf> | NONPF Core Competencies (2017) | https://www.pncb.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/NONPF_Core_Competencies.pdf | Population Focused Nurse Practitioner Competencies | <https://www.aacnursing.org/Portals/42/AcademicNursing/pdf/Population-Focused-NP-Competencies-2013.pdf> | ND AANMC Competencies (2019) | DO Competency Domains | AAMC PCRS Competencies | AAMC Weeks of Instruction and Hours Required at US Medical Schools | AAMC Clerkship Week Requirements by Curriculum Year | LCME Standards (2021-2022) Functions and Structure of a Medical School | NONPF Core Competencies (2017) | https://www.pncb.org/sites/default/files/2017-02/NONPF_Core_Competencies.pdf | https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nonpf.org/resource/resmgr/competencies/20170516_NPCompContentF.pdf | Touger-Decker, R., Benedict-Barakat, J. M., & O'Sullivan-Maillet, J. (2001). Nutrition education in health professions programs: a survey of dental, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, and nurse midwifery programs. Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 101(1), 63-69 | <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20736683/>



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