

Thunder Bay HSC is a regional acute care facility with 395 beds serving Thunder Bay and most of northwestern Ontario. Their ER sees over 106,000 visits per year.

As part of NP week, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre highlighted the roles of NPs in their institution and the contribution they make through their dedicated service.

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Jacqueline Marsh

Education and Training

I graduated from Lakehead University with my Master's of Nursing, PHC-Nurse Practitioner in 2024.

Why did you decide to become a Nurse Practitioner?

My experience as a COVID-19 nurse during the pandemic inspired me to become a Nurse Practitioner. That challenging time in health care made me realize the importance of health care providers and their role in patient care and education. I decided that I wanted to further my knowledge and education and expand my scope of practice.

Tell us about your role in your program.

In my program, my role is to triage endoscopy referrals, consult with patients prior to endoscopy procedures,

and manage primary care gastrointestinal conditions for patients who do not have a primary care provider. I also work in collaboration with the general surgeons in surgery clinics for hernia repairs and cholecystectomies.

What is the most challenging part of your profession?

As a new graduate, one of the most challenging aspects is building confidence within my expanded scope of practice. Transitioning from a registered nurse to a nurse practitioner brings a new level of responsibility in diagnosing, prescribing, and managing care independently, which can feel overwhelming at times. Additionally, staying current with medical knowledge is essential, as new research, guidelines, and treatment approaches are constantly emerging. Balancing the demands of patient care with the commitment to continuous learning requires dedication and resilience. However, I view these challenges as opportunities for growth, both professionally and personally.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your profession?

One of the most rewarding aspects of my profession is working with patients without a primary care provider, managing their conditions and seeing their health improve over time. It's incredibly fulfilling to build a therapeutic relationship with these patients and to play a role in helping them achieve better health outcomes. Additionally, I appreciate the diversity of my patient population, as it allows me to work with individuals of all ages and backgrounds, each bringing unique experiences and perspectives that enrich my practice.

Do you have any advice for those considering a career as a Nurse Practitioner?

If you're passionate about expanding your scope of practice, enjoy a wide range of career opportunities, and have a strong interest in primary care, becoming an NP can be incredibly rewarding. NPs can work

independently and provide comprehensive care, building long-term relationships with patients and managing a variety of conditions. This role is particularly impactful in regions like Northwestern Ontario, where access to health care can be limited.

involved in the development of the cardiovascular surgery program within our facility, with the intent of eventually supporting this patient population as well. It's an exciting new role for our facility that I am proud to be developing.

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Taylor Thiessen

Education and Training

After finishing the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, I completed specialty certification in critical care nursing while working on the Cardiovascular and Regional Stroke Unit. Following this, I worked in the Intensive Care Unit for several years before completing my Master of Nursing degree and the Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner program. I've also completed additional relevant courses such as Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support and the Trauma Nursing Core Course. I would say that my experience in critical care nursing has been instrumental in my current role, both in terms of knowledge while managing acute inpatients, as well as with hands-on skills and troubleshooting.

Tell us about your role in your program.

My role currently involves both supporting the thoracic surgery program and assisting with the cardiovascular surgery program implementation. I work collaboratively with the surgeons and other interdisciplinary team members to assess, diagnose, and manage patient care throughout the perioperative period. I frequently see consultations for surgical consideration or related concerns, insert and manage drains within the pleural space, educate patients and families regarding their diagnoses and plans of care, and participate in clinical research and quality improvement initiatives. I'm also

Do you have any advice for those considering a career as a Nurse Practitioner?

Don't let currently available job opportunities keep you from pursuing further education – you never know what opportunities will arise, as NPs become much more prevalent across our health care system!

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Katie Cardy

Education and Training

I graduated with my BScN in 2005 from Lakehead University with the honour of Valedictorian of my graduating class. I immediately began my career at 3C Surgical as a full-time RN. I was among the first three RNs in Northwestern Ontario to complete the CNA Medical-Surgical Certification in 2011. My love of surgical nursing then took me to the Operating Room as an RN from 2013- 2023. This further developed my surgical skill set and knowledge, allowing me to take a leadership role as a resource in General Surgery, including gynecology, thoracic, and then specializing in vascular surgery. This was the impetus to return to school for my MSN and Nurse Practitioner certificate. I have a passion for nursing, and this was a natural progression in my career. After graduating from the MSN-PHCNP program at Lakehead University in 2023, I took a role in primary care, where I continue to work, while holding a full-time position as an NP in Central Intake.

Tell us about your role in your program.

My role focuses on Endoscopy and General Surgery, working collaboratively with specialists to provide patient consults and rapid access to care and procedures. The most challenging part of our profession is time! Finding time between patients or after hours to keep up to date with the newest guidelines and practice standards is essential to our practice to provide evidence-based care.

Do you have any advice for those considering a career as a Nurse Practitioner?

The most rewarding part of our role is the feeling you get inside when you have alleviated fears or concerns for your patient. They leave the interaction feeling supported, informed, and ready to proceed in their health care journey. If you're thinking about becoming an NP, take the time to learn a variety of skill sets as an RN first. It is easy to take for granted the experiences you have in nursing that can better prepare you for the role as an NP that make you diverse and unique in your ability to provide health care.

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Christina Johnson

Education/training

Before completing my education as a Nurse Practitioner (NP), I worked as a Registered Nurse in the Neurosurgical unit from 2004-2016 and then as a Clinical Stroke Nurse from 2016-2018. I graduated from Lakehead University in 2018 with my Master's in Public Health and Nurse Practitioner certificate. I have had the opportunity to

work in primary care and am now working at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre with the Nurse-Led Outreach Team.

Why did you decide to become a Nurse Practitioner?

I have always loved learning and really enjoyed being a student. Once I obtained my degree in Nursing, I decided to keep going. I enjoy being able to review client histories, do full assessments and come up with differential diagnoses and treatment plans for clients.

Tell us about your role in your program.

The Nurse-Led Outreach Team has five NPs and one RN. As one of these NPs, I assess clients in Long Term Care Homes, Assisted Living Homes and Retirement Homes to help prevent avoidable Emergency room visits. We also help clients who do not have a primary provider with their medication refills and chronic issues. Emergency follow-ups with clients who have visited the ED are also completed to review our role and remind them to contact our team before accessing the ED for non-acute issues.

What is the most challenging part of your profession?

As a mobile-type clinic, it is sometimes difficult to see clients in their homes as it is not a scheduled appointment. A lot of times, we may be working with little to no information, especially if there is no family involved with the client. The multidisciplinary teams at these facilities are a lifeline for us, and we would not be able to work efficiently without their help.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your profession?

Being able to assess a client from start to finish and follow up to assess improvements is very rewarding. Most clients in the geriatric population are not keen to leave their apartments so having the ability to try to treat them at home is very appreciative to both the client and their families.

Do you have any advice for those considering a career as a Nurse Practitioner?

If you are passionate about the medical field and love learning, I say why not? Nurse Practitioners are very autonomous and it can be very rewarding career. It really opens a lot of doors as there are so many different areas a NP can have a career in.

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Laura Hendren

Education/Training

Bachelor of Nursing Science from Queen's University (2013). Masters of Nursing/Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner from University of Toronto (2018).

Why did you become a Nurse Practitioner?

I enjoyed working as a nurse and appreciated the time it afforded me to spend with patients. I wanted to expand my skill set to better serve patients, while still practicing through a nursing lens.

What is your role within the Cancer Centre?

I primarily see patients on chemotherapy/immunotherapy to assess their fitness for treatment. The NP role allows me to write prescriptions for supportive medications, and order diagnostic imaging, as needed. A few mornings per week, I do bone marrow biopsies, often training medical students, residents, and NPs how to perform this procedure. I also run a smoking cessation clinic, and have recently expanded this role to help patients with vaping, and cannabis use, as well. Depending on my availability, I assist with admissions to the inpatient oncology unit, and do initial inpatient consults for the medical oncology team.

What is the most challenging part of your profession?

Patient care is becoming increasingly complex as individuals live longer with multiple chronic illnesses. This is especially true in cancer care; in certain circumstances, our patients live years even with advanced disease. In our current health care system, we are facing a lack of human resources to manage these medically complex cases. As Nurse Practitioners, we are often asked to fill gaps from

both a nursing and medical perspective, which can lead to burnout.

What is the most rewarding part of your profession?

As a Nurse Practitioner, I am fortunate to have longer appointment times compared to my physician colleagues, which allows me to establish good rapport with our wonderful patients at the Cancer Centre. I find it very rewarding to support patients throughout their cancer journey.

Do you have any advice for those considering a career as a Nurse Practitioner?

Spend time working in your specialty of interest. It helps to understand the nursing perspective, and have familiarity with common patient presentations, prior to becoming an NP. I would also recommend a commitment to life-long learning, as advances in medicine are occurring every day. This is a very exciting time to consider becoming an NP.

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Hsu-Yin Boo

Education/Training

I'm a new grad from the Masters of Public Health with Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner program at Lakehead University. Previous to this, I worked in the ICU, PACU and in the community as a registered nurse.

Why did you decide to become a Nurse Practitioner?

I decided I wanted to become an NP because I love learning. I'm committed to contributing to increasing access to health care for people in Northwestern Ontario.

Tell us about your role in your program.

I am newly employed as the NP for the Clinical Decision Unit (CDU) Pilot program in the Emergency Department. The intended role of the CDU is to hold patients who would benefit from a longer ER stay and avoid hospital admissions. As this is a new NP role and I am a new NP, the learning curve has been quite steep! I'm excited to be part of this pilot and feeling hopeful about shaping the program.

What is the most challenging part of your profession?

As a new grad, I'm finding it challenging to shape this new role and navigate the existing systems that are in place. I'm looking forward to getting a little more comfortable — I know that I will with time!

What is the most rewarding aspect of your profession?

I love working with patients to create a plan of care that they feel good about. I'm also really enjoying all my new colleagues in the Emergency Department.

Do you have any advice for those considering a career as a Nurse Practitioner?

So far, this career is very engaging. As NP roles become more established, there will be many interesting opportunities. I think it is an exciting time to be an NP.

Why did you decide to become a Nurse Practitioner (NP)?

Having been part of the ED family for over 10 years, I wanted to continue providing better support to ED patients seen in my previous role as an RN. I have always been one to advance my practice on a regular basis, be it education, skill development, or in my role as an advanced practitioner. As an NP with the IMC, I have great autonomy, and am able to include a more holistic approach into my care.

My role with the Internal Medicine Clinic (IMC)

Under the broader umbrella of the IMC, my role as the CHF/COPD NP Patient Navigator, is to assist patients with their chronic disease management, (CHF and COPD), better navigate the health care system. This is particularly true for patients who are leaving the hospital with a new diagnosis. Exacerbation of these conditions often result in frequent visits to the Emergency Department. Additionally, I support COPD and CHF patients throughout their hospital admission and at discharge. In collaboration with the patient and their MRP, I find ways to support admission avoidance and transitions planning by developing a post-discharge plan of care. Using an evidence based approach I work with the patient and their family to set goals, provide education and advocacy, and support the coordination of out-patient medical management and social supports.

What is the most challenging part of your profession?

I have come to appreciate how difficult it can be for patients seen by me, when they have no community family health care provider, and have only walk-in clinics to rely on. An extension of my role as NP navigator, is to hopefully connect patients with clinics accepting new patients in the community and following up with these patients a little more closely upon discharge.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your profession?

It is rewarding to see how well patients feel and progress with their chronic conditions after I have intervened in their care while in hospital. This is more a team effort, and I happy to be part of this dynamic team of professionals and allied health members. I'm very fortunate to work with a fantastic group of people, such as attending community physicians, hospitalist physician group, ED nursing staff/management, who are accepting of my role as a nurse practitioner, and consider me a valuable addition to the team.

Nurse Practitioner Spotlight:



Rajesh Talpade

Education /Training

Masters of Nursing (NP stream)-distinction from Athabasca University, graduated in 2020.