

Differences between a doctor of nursing practice dnp and a doctor of philosophy p...

[Education](#), [Discipline](#)



The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and the conventional PhD are both terminal degree programs in the nursing discipline. This means that they are the highest degrees a nurse can hope to achieve. The DNP is a new option in the discipline and shares similarities with the PhD program traditionally offered. The two degrees both employ a scholarly approach needing high standards of critical thinking and ability to synthesize theory. They also aim to advance the practice of professional nursing (AACN, 2006).

According to the AACN, (2006), the DNP program is a practice-oriented program. It aims to advance excellence in the nursing practice. The conventional PhD is research-oriented. It promotes excellence in research methodology and scientific content. The nurse in a PhD program prepares to carry out original research that will advance or augment the theoretical basis of nursing. The nurse undertaking a DNP applies and translates research recommendations into practice. Requirements for undertaking the two programs also differ.

To earn a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree may take from one year to three years. This is dependent on whether one starts with a Master's or Bachelor's degree. A PhD requires approximately four or five years of study. In carrying out the project work related to the degree, a PhD requires the student nurse to complete and defend a research project which is original. A DNP program will require the nurse to undertake a project which entails extensive application of research (AACN, 2006).

The DNP program was created as a response to trends in nursing practice which indicated the need for such a program. These include the rising

complexity in health care which results in the increased need for knowledge in advanced practice. Education trends also indicated that other disciplines in health were moving their practice degrees to doctorate levels. This can be exemplified in disciplines where the terminal practice degree was a requirement before professional practice like AUD in Audiology and PharmD in Pharmacy. In conclusion, the DNP is a practice-oriented doctoral program which focuses heavily on innovative, evidence-based practice. Either degree (DNP and PhD) remains an excellent investment as it opens up many career options for nurses who undertake them.

References

AACN- American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2006). Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice. Available at www.aacn.nche.edu