

## Note from the Asia/Far East

### Career Pathways

#### General Nursing Practice

There are 2 types of licenses recognized in Taiwan to practice nursing: registered nurse (RN) and registered professional nurse (RPN). The Ministry of Examination in Taiwan offers both RN and RPN license examinations. Both exams are comprehensive in scope and cover subjects in basic medicine, pathophysiology, pharmacology, medical-surgical nursing, pediatric nursing, maternal-child nursing, and psychosocial nursing. The RPN examination is considered more difficult since it tests more theoretical and conceptual nursing knowledge as well as advanced medical knowledge.

Generally, students who graduate from the nursing high school program in the TVE system are eligible only for RN licensure, and not for the RPN licensure. Graduates from all other programs, whether within the TVE or GUE systems, are eligible to take the RN and/or the RPN national license examination. In practice, RNs and RPNs have the same responsibilities for implementing nursing care. However, nurses with an RPN license may have more opportunities for advancement. Presently, the Taiwanese government is in the process of raising the educational requirement for RPN licensure to a bachelor's degree.

#### Advanced Nursing Practice

In 2000, Taiwan began the development of a nurse practitioner (NP) system to improve collaboration between physicians and nurses and to provide continuous and comprehensive patient care. Before the development of this system, nurses in many hospitals and some clinics who were acting in advanced roles were often viewed as "physician assistants." In recognition of the expanding role of nurses in the healthcare system, the Department of Health established national standards for training and licensure for NPs to ensure a high level of competency as advanced practice nurses.

Currently, the NP system offers two specialty areas, medical and surgical. To be qualified as an NP, nurses must have an RPN license, at least five years of clinical practice in a specialty area, and the endorsement of their hospital management. Generally, those nurses recommended by the hospital for the NP examination are functioning at an advanced level as advanced clinical specialists. Once identified as a qualified candidate, they are eligible to take the NP examination which is both written and oral. Upon successful completion of the examination, they enter into a concentrated, hospital-based training program lasting for at least six months. The training is largely guided by physicians and includes 160 hours of coursework in advanced pharmacology, advanced pathophysiology, advanced health assessment, clinical judgment, health promotion and disease prevention, and medical law and ethics. In addition, candidates must complete a clinical practicum under a physician's supervision with at least 30 medical or surgical patients and at least 10 acute and critical patients. After successful completion of the practicum, candidates are awarded an NP license which is renewable every six years.