

Post an explanation of your choice of a nursing specialty within the program. Describe any difficulties you had (or are having) in making your choice and the factors that drove/are driving your decision. Identify at least one professional organization affiliated with your chosen specialty and provide details on becoming a member.

Nursing has always been a passion of mine as a young girl, and I started pursuing a career in nursing twelve years ago, immediately after high school. My long-term career goal was to become a nurse practitioner and have an autonomous practice. I started working in the Medical-Surgical unit, PCU, or Step-down unit and did some travel nursing in corrections and behavioral health. The later units I worked on shaped the decision to specialize entirely in psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. The psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) role serves every facet of health care because health cannot exist without mental health (American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), 2019).

PMHNPs can work in diverse settings and with patients across their lifespans, from children to older adults. This versatility appeals to me, as I enjoy the flexibility of working with different populations and in various healthcare settings.

Pursuing a post-master's degree in psychiatry was never complicated for me. The difficulty I had was not in choosing a specialty but rather in choosing school and tuition affordability. It took me two years to research, find a school, and decide to start. The first school of choice did not offer me admission after wasting my time with its rigorous admission process for international students. I did not want to waste more time, so I applied to Walden University and got accepted.

Factors that drove my decision to choose a school were the affordability of the tuition and years of study. I wanted a school that would not break my bank account. Though Walden University was not cheap, a tuition discount from my nursing organization, the National Association of Nigerian Nurses in North America (NANNNA), sealed the decision for me.

The professional organization affiliated with my chosen specialty is the American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA). The APNA has approximately 14,000 members connected through an influential community of psychiatric mental health nurse professionals (American Psychiatric Nurses Association [APNA], 2020). The APNA offers members resources, programs, and opportunities to advance the psychiatric mental health nursing profession. Becoming a member provides many benefits and leads to personal and professional enrichment that benefits patients with mental illnesses or substance abuse disorders. To become an APNA member, you must complete a registration form and pay the membership fee of \$135.00. APNA offers different types of memberships and is the only PMH nursing organization that includes all PMH registered nurses of all education levels, so I chose this organization. Members of APNA practice in all settings including inpatient, community, academic, research, private and public health institutions, and high-level administrative positions at the state and federal levels (APNA, 2020).

Many nurses choose to specialize in psychiatric mental health nursing because they find it very rewarding to help patients who are struggling with mental health issues. The decision to become a PMHNP is often driven by personal interests, professional goals, and a commitment to improving mental health outcomes for individuals and communities.

It was never difficult for me deciding to do a post masters' degree in Psychiatry. The difficulty I had was deciding what school to attend. It took me a while to finally settle for Walden. I wanted a post master's program that will not be longer than one year because I thought already being an FNP should give me some advantage. One school I