

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sarah Michelle

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

Welcome to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*, a show for new NPs and students that want to pass their board exam the first time and make that transition from RN to NP as seamless as possible. I'm your host Sarah Michelle. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Hello, my friends, Sarah Michelle here. And today I'm doing a little bit of a repeat of a YouTube video we just did because I know many of you listen on the podcast and not on YouTube. And everybody out there right now is talking about AANP versus ANCC because we have some updates that have happened, and it is major graduation and testing season for us right now.

So I want to touch on some of the common questions that we get from students. And hopefully this little quick podcast will help you, whether you're deciding which exam to take, if you're just interested in hearing about the exam updates, or if you are looking for a good resource to use as a reference about these exams.

Now, this is a little bit of a redo of an earlier podcast because we have an earlier AANP versus ANCC episode. But because of the changes that have occurred this year, we are kind of cataloging that episode a bit, we're retiring it because now we want to be at the forefront of all that is new.

So before we get into the details about those updates, I'm going to cover a very common question that we get asked here at SMNP. And that is which exam will my courses prepare you for? And the answer is resoundingly both. Our reviews have an outstanding, and I mean over like 99% outstanding, pass rate on both exams. So no matter which one you decide to take, you are going to be fully prepared.

So to cover some of just the basic testing differences between the two exams first, because I think that's important, then we'll jump into those updates. So starting with AANP here, overwhelmingly, and I do mean overwhelmingly, AANP is the more popular exam with test takers. But there doesn't really seem to be a real reasoning behind that.

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

Now, personally, I think that might be related to ANCC used to have an exam format that was much more not clinical heavy, and that might have steered people away a little bit, but that has lessened in the last few years. But still, by far, AANP is the test that most students take. And those who pass AANP are going to have FMP-C displayed with their names.

Now that C stands for certified, so it shows that a nurse practitioner has taken and passed a board exam. AANP, similarly to ANCC, goes through routine updates. But big ones such as those guideline updates that we're always worried about tend to only happen every two to three years.

So even though these exams are looked at yearly and there might be some slight adjustments made on an annual basis, this is not something to be super concerned about. An AANP always puts out a press release ahead of any true exam format or guide updates.

So back to the exam itself. It is currently a 150 question multiple choice exam. Of these 150 questions on your AANP, only 135 count towards your score. Which means 15 of these are trial questions or practice questions.

Now, unfortunately, there is no way to know which 15 questions are the trial questions that don't count. But do know if you see a question about something you've never heard about before, it is pretty darn likely that it's just one of those trial questions and there's no need to stress and get flustered about it during your exam.

You are going to be given three hours to complete these 150 questions. And unlike NCLEX, where the exam is what is known as a smart exam and shuts off on its own, AANP is a full 150 questions every time, no matter what, this is not a smart exam. And so I just want you to be well aware you will be taking 150 questions no matter what. It does not shut off on its own, unless, of course, you're out of town.

As well, AANP is a multiple choice only exam, which I know is very enticing for some of you. Every question is going to have four answers and you are going to be selecting one answer.

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

So a few more details about the exam before we talk about those updates to AANP. It is a common misconception, very, very common, that AANP does not include non clinical content, also known as professional role content. But it absolutely can and does include that content.

Now, typically, it's less than five or so questions, but I want you to be the most prepared you can be. I want you to get those easy points. So definitely do not overlook that non clinical content if you are preparing to take AANP.

If you're using our view courses, definitely check out the crash course professional role videos. And another big thing to know about AANP is that it has a significant focus on the older adult population. If you look at the testing outline, which is available on their website, you are going to see there are about 30 questions on the older adult, and another 10 about the elder adult, AKA that is 30% of your exam right there.

I highlight that for you because I want you to be sure that you don't glaze over that population when you're studying because it's such a significant focus of your exam. 30% is a lot, y'all.

And to pass this exam, you must score 500 out of 800 total points. Unfortunately, AANP does not release information about how they weigh their questions, so we're not really able to transfer this to needing a certain amount of questions correct to pass. And with AANP you are going to get an email right away with your results upon completion of the exam.

So you will know right then in there if you have passed and you are a real deal nurse practitioner. AANP also sends your official score report to you whether you pass or fail. So you're going to know at some point in time what you got correct out of 800 possible points. But again, it is impossible to correlate this to a certain number of questions correctly. And as of ANCC, a pass is a pass and you are a real deal nurse practitioner, whether you get a 500 out of 800 or an 800 out of 800.

Now let's talk about the testing environment. This is one of those big changes. Very recently, in the last quarter, AANP changed the company

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

that they use to administer their exams. AANP test takers are now using Prometric testing centers, just like ANCC. So both exams are administered in the same place now, those Prometric testing centers, whether you're taking ANCC or AANP.

And this is really exciting for our AANP test takers because the Prometric testing center software has a lot of really cool features that the old software did not have before. So you can highlight, you can cross out answers, which you were not able to previously do on this exam. You can pick out those key words and phrases. It will really help you narrow down answer choices and calm down that anxiety when you need it.

And, of course, you're going to be given a blank sheet of paper or sometimes a whiteboard and marker, depending upon your testing center to be able to write down anything you would like during your exam. And so that is one of the biggest updates that came.

The next biggest update is our renewal options for AANP. And I feel like I'm jumping out of my seat recording this because it used to be that AANP required that you have 1,000 direct patient care hours every five years. And if you did not, you had to retake your exam to renew your certification.

Now, you still have to get 1,000 hours every five years, but they've really opened this up now. So it used to be just direct patient care. Now you can get these hours through administration, research, education, my favorite. You have so much more flexibility in how you renew the certification now.

And this is as new as April 1st of this year and this is a really big deal. Now, of course, at the end of the five years, you could always sit for the exam again. But I know that many of you want to be done with exams after this one.

And in addition to this, of course, you have to get your 1,000 hours in one of those categories, and you have to get those 100 CE hours in order to be able to reapply for your certification when the time comes. 25 of those 100 hours must be in pharmacology, but they can also be replaced with

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

preceptor hours. And you can check out all of this wonderful information on their website too. It really breaks it down.

So we've talked all about AANP, it's a multiple choice style exam, you've got to get 500 out of 800. They've now moved to the Prometric testing centers with all these new exam features, and they've opened up a new option. So lots of AANP changes. But now let's talk about ANCC.

So once a nurse practitioner has passed her ANCC, their credentials will be FNP-BC. So the BC just stands for board certified. So although both of these exams make you board certified, ANCC uses this specific notation unlike AANP, which is just FNP-C. But rest assured this is just a difference in how the credentials are laid out and either way once you pass your exams, you are a board certified real deal nurse practitioner.

Now the last big update to content in the ANCC came in September of 2022, so still fairly recent. And there seemed to be a lot of misconceptions regarding ANCC, so hopefully I'm going to clear a little bit of that up for you here.

ANCC has 175 questions. And just like AANP, it has some of those trial questions built in too. So of these 175 questions, 25 questions are trial questions, and only 150 of them count towards your overall score. Just like on AANP, if you get some wacky, weirdo question you have never heard of, just tell yourself, "Hey, this is probably one of those trial questions." No big deal, take your best guess and move on with life.

And since it is a longer exam, you do have three and a half hours to complete it. The exam is not going to shut off on its own, so we're not having NCLEX style here either with ANCC unless you run out of time. So no matter what, you are going to be answering 175 exam questions if you choose ANCC.

ANCC does have a little bit more of that non clinical content than AANP. I think this will scare students the most but, guys, it's not scary. With that 2022 update ANCC does not outline specifically how many non clinical

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

questions there are, but you can expect around 20% of your exam to be non clinical.

Now what I mean by non clinical are things like research or law based questions, questions about even about simple things like HIPAA. And I know that sounds intimidating, but the good news is these questions tend to be really straightforward. They're literally memorization questions, as long as you know your basics. And again, I cover all this for you in the courses. So you're going to be absolutely ready to go to take this exam.

To pass ANCC you need to get 350 out of 500 points. ANCC also does not release how they weigh their questions, so there's no way to know how many questions these points equate to. And unlike AANP, ANCC only sends your score if you don't pass. Otherwise, you just get a passing email and that is it, you are a real deal nurse practitioner. So if you pass ANCC, you will never know your score. If you fail, you will get that score.

ANCC also has what are called alternate format questions. So these can be things like select all that apply, picture questions, hot spots, drag and drop. And the great news is that with this last update ANCC has moved away from these question styles a little bit. So it is more multiple choice, and much more in line with AANP. These exams are becoming pretty comparable these days.

And just know that these alternate format questions are also usually pretty straightforward. And for me personally on the exam, they were a really nice break in the monotony of all the multiple choice questions back to back to back.

Just like with AANP, ANCC is taken at those Prometric testing centers, and you have the ability with the software to highlight, cross out, flag questions to come back. And so with either exam you have these abilities now, which is really nice in helping you sift through the content in a question. Of course, with ANCC you get the scrap paper too.

As well, another large update regarding these exams is with ANCC, because in 2020 in reference to the pandemic and all the chaos going on,

[Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner Podcast](#) with Sarah Michelle

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

and the backup of testing, they offered at-home testing. They are no longer doing that. That has now been shut down. There is no more at-home testing at all between either of these exams. ANCC and AANP are both in-person exams again, they must be taken at a testing center.

So with renewal requirements, ANCC has been a bit more lenient for a long time in how you renew, which is why I think there have been students that have been drawn to ANCC. So ANCC does not have any certain hours of practice for requirement, but rather requires proof of professional development.

So you still have to renew your certification every five years. But you can do this in a multitude of ways, such as precepting hours, teaching, research projects, academic credits, or even solely by doubling up on education hours. So you have a lot of flexibility, a lot of options for your renewal.

And, of course, you can also renew by sitting for the exam again. So just like with AANP, it's always an option to test again, even though I know most of you will not choose that option.

I know that it seems to be increasingly common for students to sign up for and take both exams these days. And if you choose to do so, that's totally up to you, but it is by no means required or necessary. I know it can be stressful enough to sit for one long exam, so sitting for another can seem daunting. And in the end, you're a real deal NP no matter which one you take.

Most states are actually only going to allow you to apply for your license with one certification or the other, and they're not going to allow you to submit your application with both exam results. So just something to think about.

And one last note I want to leave you with in regards to taking one or both of these exams, because we get asked this all the time, if you are not successful with an exam, there is no bearing on if you can sit for the other exam.

Ep #86: AANP & ANCC Updates

For example, if you fail AANP, to retest with them you need to complete CE hours. But instead, if you choose to sign up for and take ANCC, there is no wait period, there's no CE hours, none of that. You can just literally sign up and test.

So the same goes vice versa as well. If you fail ANCC, you could take AANP right away with no additional requirements. So in the end, no matter which exam you choose, you will ultimately become a real deal nurse practitioner when you pass.

So the last thing, the very last thing I want to leave you with is just thinking about the passing rates, I want to leave you in a good spot here. So as of last reporting at the time of this podcast AANP has an 84% pass rate for family nurse practitioners. And ANCC has a slightly higher 87% pass rate.

But either way, with both of these exams, that is over 80% of students passing. And so it is really reassuring that the odds are truly and overwhelmingly in your favor.

So I hope this podcast really cleaned some things up for you. I hope it helped you make a decision about which exam that you would like to take. And you can always go back and listen to other pieces of it too once you choose an exam if you want to refresh on something. Let this podcast be a resource for you.

As an extra bonus, friends, if you're looking for support no matter what phase of your nurse practitioner journey you're currently in, I have communities available for both students and new nurse practitioners. In these communities, we work to uplift one another and grow this profession together every single day. Links to join will be included for you in the show notes.

Thanks for listening to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*. If you want more information about the different types of support we offer to students and new NPs, visit stressfreenp.com. See you next week.