
A Position Statement on the Value of Certification in Neuroscience Nursing

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Description

Nursing certification is the formal recognition of specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes (ABNS, 2022; ABSNC, 2022).

Position

It is the position of the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) and the American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) that

- certification advances nursing practice through the demonstration of specialized knowledge in the respective neuroscience area
- the rigorous national certification examinations validate clinical and professional knowledge and judgment in a well-defined specialty practice area
- certification provides benefits to the certified nurse, their employer, the public, and patients.

Background

Nursing certification is a voluntary process by which a nurse, through a content-specific examination, validates they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities fundamental to accomplishing their professional role (ICE, 2010; ABNS, 2020; ABSNC, 2022). The content of nursing certification examinations is based on the knowledge, skills, or competencies required for proficient performance in the specialty practice area. The content is identified through a role delineation study or job/practice analysis that is periodically updated. Neuroscience nursing certification and subsequent credentials are time limited, and periodic renewals are required to maintain a certification. It is hypothesized that certification can lead to higher quality care, more uniform practice, and improved patient outcomes (Hickey et al., 2014; Coelho, 2020; Coto et al., 2020). The preparation process for a specialty neuroscience certification examination provides the nurse with a review of detailed education addressing multiple areas of practice and knowledge within that specialty. ABNN certificants continue to expand on their knowledge through practice, continuing education, and/or professional development throughout their 5-year certification cycle. With the advancements of science and technology related to neuroscience changing over the years, the goal of ABNN's recertification program is for certificants to demonstrate continued competency, which is "the ongoing commitment of a registered nurse to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, and judgment with the attitudes, values, and beliefs required to practice safely, effectively, and ethically in a designated role, patient population, and/or setting" (ABSNC, 2022). Recertification demonstrates an ABNN-certified nurse's commitment to patient care and dedication to life-long learning. Many nurses pursue neuroscience certification for its intrinsic value, as it can contribute to recognition of personal achievement, specialization, and professional accomplishments by the nurse (Walter et al., 2022).

Rationale

AANN recognizes neuroscience nursing practice as a nursing specialty. ABNN recognized the need for the professional neuroscience nurse to achieve certification in their field. ABNN developed the first neuroscience nursing certification program in 1978 with the Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN) program. In 2013, ABNN added the Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRN) certification program, and in 2021, AANN in collaboration with ABNN created the Certificate Program for the Seizure and Epilepsy Healthcare Professional. The certifications demonstrate to patients, peers, employers, and the public that the certified nurse has attained specialized knowledge and skills in caring for a unique patient population. Obtaining the CNRN certification shows that the certified nurse has basic and advanced specialty knowledge needed to competently care for both neurosurgical and neurological patient populations. The purpose of the SCRN certification is to demonstrate credibility and professional distinction in stroke nursing (ABNN, 2022). Stroke certification also informs employers, patients, and the public that the nurse possesses the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience in stroke care to perform competently. Nursing certification helps work toward achieving the “Future of Nursing 2020–2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity” recommendations of enabling and supporting nurses to meet the specific medical needs of complex and diverse patient populations (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021).

Method

A literature search of CINAHL, MEDLINE, and PubMed databases was conducted utilizing keywords “nursing,” “certification,” “competency,” and “credential.” A search period from 2010 to 2022 was used, with language limited to English. The search was also cross-referenced with the ABNS Certification Bibliography.

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