



Joint Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nursing, Radiologic Nursing Certification Board, and Radiologic Nursing Certification Task Force Position Paper: The Value of Certification in Radiologic Nursing

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the white paper is to provide relevant background information on the importance of certification for nursing and the subspecialty of radiologic nursing. The Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nursing (ARIN), Radiologic Nursing Certification Board (RNCB), and Radiologic Nursing Certification Task Force support the 2005 American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) recommendations for nursing speciality certification. (*J Radiol Nurs* 2015;34:157-159.)

KEYWORDS: Radiology Nurse Certification; Certified Radiology Nurse; ARIN; RNCB; Certification.

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BACKGROUND

The Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nursing (ARIN) mission statement aligns as the authority on radiology nursing. Since 1980, ARIN has set the benchmark for radiology nurse education, standards development, and the advancement of practice with the implementation of evidence-based practice. The Radiologic Nursing Certification Board, Inc. (RNCB®) was established in 1996 and charged with the dual purpose of developing a credentialing program to enhance the specialty practice of radiology nursing. The RNCB® is the only nationally and internationally recognized certification organization for radiology nursing and has been

administering the Certified Radiology Nurse (CRN[®]) program since 1998. The CRN[®] designation provides professional recognition and documentation of the additional education and knowledge required for a radiology nurse. The CRN[®] program was accredited by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC), formerly known as the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), in 2013.

Certification is defined by the ABNS as “the formal recognition of specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes” (ABNS, 2005; Kaplow, 2011). All ABNS-related activities and initiatives are designed to achieve the organization’s vision that “specialty nursing certification is the standard by which the public recognizes quality nursing care” (ABNS, 2006; INS & INCC, 2009).

DISCUSSION

In 2004, the ABNS Research Committee conducted the Value of Specialty Nursing Certification study, the first multiorganizational survey to determine perceptions of nursing certifications (Niebuhr & Biel, 2007; INS & INCC, 2009). Certified nurses, noncertified nurses, and nurse managers from 20 specialty nursing organizations were surveyed on value statements relating to certification.

The ABNS study rated 12 intrinsic and six extrinsic statements that support affirmative factors for the certified nurse. Specific personal benefits acknowledged by nurses who hold certification include personal achievement and satisfaction, validation of specialized knowledge, and evidence of professionalism. Extrinsic factors recognized included recognition from peers and other health professionals, increased marketability, and greater earning potential (Niebuhr & Biel, 2007; Kaplow, 2011; INS & INCC, 2009). Regardless of the job position, a certification credential represents advanced accountability and accomplishment, in addition to acknowledgement from management, peers, and consumers (ABNS, 2006; Kaplow, 2011; INS & INCC, 2009).

Certification is an established method to validate that nurses have the knowledge, skills, and abilities essential to specialized nursing practice. Certification is identified as a hallmark of excellence benefiting the nurse, public, patient, and health care organization (AACN, 2003; Kaplow, 2011).

Several papers support the belief that certification enhances the feeling of personal accomplishment and professionalism and validates specialized knowledge for both certified and noncertified nurses (Niebuhr & Biel, 2007; Wynd, 2003; Cary, 2001; Kaplow, 2011; Wade, 2009). A majority of managers have a preference to hire a nurse who is certified. Employers should seek

certified nurses for their workforce, support these individuals, and inform patients and the public about the certification status of their workforce (Stromborg & Niebuhr, 2003; Kaplow, 2011). By supporting certification, the organization provides an approach to retain a satisfied workforce.

Additionally, the growing participation in the Magnet[®] designation offered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet Recognition Program[®] may encourage certification nationwide. The Magnet[®] program has increased demand from hospital leaders to recruit, retain, and increase certified nurse numbers within their organizations (INS & INCC, 2009).

Certification has a cascading effect in other aspects of a nurse’s work. Schmalenberg and Kramer (2008) found that certified nurses possessed higher job satisfaction and believed quality of care was higher, although both certified and noncertified nurses believed that they worked in healthy environments (Wade, 2009). A healthy work environment is critical as it promotes high nurse satisfaction and high productivity (Schmalenberg & Kramer, 2008). In addition to a healthy work environment, certified nurses possess higher perceptions of empowerment, which lead to improved work effectiveness (Piazza, Donahue, Dykes, Griffin, & Fitzpatrick, 2006; INS & INCC, 2009).

Recognition of certification by employers in the United States is variable and includes a mix of financial and nonmonetary support. Ulrich et al. studied intensive care units that earned Magnet[®] recognition or the Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses were in the pursuit of Magnet[®] or Beacon or were not having such activity. The study revealed that 50% of Magnet[®] organizations and Beacon units recognized their nurses who achieved certification and provided financial support for the examination. In addition, these units were recognized as maintaining a healthy work environment (Ulrich et al., 2007; INS & INCC, 2009). A study of 300 intensive care units in 120 facilities revealed that 25% of the facilities supported certification through bonuses and 42% provided public recognition of the certification (Kirchhoff & Dahl, 2006; INS & INCC, 2009).

Nursing certification organizations and employers are obligated to safeguard the public trust in ensuring safe and effective care. Certification is a method to ensure this. With the demanding criteria required to achieve the credential, certification becomes a crucial measurement to patients and employers that a nurse is qualified and possesses specialty area knowledge (Stromborg & Niebuhr, 2005; Kaplow, 2011). Current studies reveal higher knowledge scores by certified nurses. One research study studied specialty practice

knowledge and the link to that certification. Nurses with a wound care certification scored significantly higher on a wound care knowledge test as compared with nurses without a certifications or a nonwound care certification. (Zulkowski, Ayello, & Wexler, 2007; Kaplow, 2011). Coleman et al. established that certified nurses scored higher than noncertified nurses on two knowledge surveys in their specialty and were more apt to use best-practice guidelines (Coleman et al., 2010).

The relationship between certified nurses and patient outcomes has been scrutinized in research. Newhouse, Johantgen, Pronovost, and Johnson (2005) found an 8% decrease in complications or mortality in units with certified registered nurses as compared with units without certified registered nurses. These research studies found that a correlation between proportion of certified nurses and a reduction in patient falls (Kendall-Gallagher & Blegen, 2009). Certification and the effect on patient outcomes is an area that warrants further research with satisfactory sample sizes, robust analyses, and generalizability. The findings can then be used to guide budgets, staffing, and policy.

Research is clear on the positive impact certification has on nurses' personal and professional lives, the knowledge that a certified nurse brings to patient care, the value to the organization from certification, and the impact on patient outcomes. Certification is recognition of expertise in a nursing practice specialty validating an individual's knowledge needed to provide safe patient care. Certification is a crucial link in the health care chain and a key validator of a health care provider's knowledge that the patient deserves.

STATEMENT OF POSITION

In accordance with the ABNS 2005 statement, it is the position of the ARIN and the RNCB[®]—that:

1. Registered nurses providing radiology nursing care to patients in radiology practice settings seek to obtain certification as a CRN[®].
2. Certified nurses should promote their certification by publicly displaying their credentials and introducing themselves as a CRN[®].
3. The CRN[®] credential should be incorporated into professional career advancement models as a means to recognize specialized knowledge and clinical judgment.
4. Radiology nursing practice is continually evolving; therefore, continuing education is essential to remaining current with radiology practices.
5. Health care organizations should recognize and support the CRN[®] credential as a benchmark for achieving excellence in radiology nursing.

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