



NURSING CERTIFICATION AND COMPETENCY SUMMIT

Building an International Research Agenda

**October 7-9, 2009
Baltimore, MD**



Background and Introduction

In 1996 the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC) hosted a “State of the Knowledge” conference on nursing certification. The impetus for this conference was the lack of empirical evidence to support the value of nursing certification and the lack of consensus within the field on critical questions related to nursing certification. As a result of this conference 13 recommendations were generated that addressed communication and collaboration, technology, standardization, continued competence, and the link between certification and patient outcomes. The participants concluded that “The relationship between certification and patient outcomes is the singular most important issue in the future of nursing specialization, and certification hinges on the research findings related to this area”.¹ Over 12 years have passed since the State of the Knowledge conference, and while considerable progress has been made on many of the consensus recommendations, there continues to be a dearth of empirical studies that link nursing certification to patient outcomes. This conference concluded that, “Empiric evaluation of the impact of certification and the dissemination of the findings needs to be a priority” (ONCC 1999, p. 55).

More recently, in 2005² and again in 2007³, CCI – the Competency & Credentialing Institute – hosted a Think Tank on continuing competence in nursing. The experts and thought leaders who participated in the Think Tanks sought to advance competency development, assessment, and education and create a vision for patient safety. The group established a charter that aims for a “collaborative initiative to build consensus for a process for continued competence assessment for professional nurses that is practical, cost-effective, transferable and a nationally-accepted platform in order to ensure patient safety and quality of care for the public” (CCI, 2008, p. 14).

The CCI *Continued Competence Leadership Forum* examined continuing competence and patient safety from a variety of perspectives, including those of health care consumers, nursing, and medicine. The Think Tank participants advocated for change to include: effective use of technology and information sharing; the conduct of research in continuing competence and patient safety; focused learning from colleagues in a variety of disciplines; and employer support to measure, record and report continuing competence. Consensus was reached that future research was needed to find ways to effectively measure continuing competence in a way that is objective and fair to patient care providers while leading to better patient care (CCI, 2008, p. 5).

If competency is a precursor to patient safety and quality of care, of great concern is: *How is competency assessed and evaluated?* Nursing certification is valued as one avenue for competency validation. With the increasing upheaval in health care systems and the growing complexity of patient care, it is imperative that we validate the impact of nurses and nursing practice on patient outcomes. It is time to establish a research-

¹ Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation. (1999). Report of a State-of-the-Knowledge Conference on US Nursing Certification ONCC Research Committee and Executive Staff. *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 31(1): 51. Internet Accessed from General OneFile 10/13/07.

² www.cc-institute.org/docs_upload/white_paper_V7A.pdf

³ www.cc-institute.org/docs_upload/TT07_white_paper.pdf

based agenda that will focus on evidence of the quality and effectiveness of certified nurses' practice.

Nursing Certification and Competency Research Summit

In an effort to build on the pioneering work in the field, and take the next steps to establish an empirical basis for nursing certification, CCI, in partnership with the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), is convening a *Nursing Certification and Competency Summit* October 7-9, 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland. This event will bring together the universe of nursing certification organizations, affiliated credentialing agencies, testing companies and consumer advocates.

The purpose of the Summit is to obtain consensus on a unified research agenda in support of nursing certification.

The Summit objectives are to:

- Identify research projects that address the research priorities.
- Create opportunities for organizations to partner on research activities.
- Establish plans for organizations to adopt the research agenda.
- Design a communication and marketing plan to disseminate key messages about the international nursing certification research agenda.
- Develop a funding plan for nursing certification research.

The following research priorities and research questions will serve as the basis for our work at the Research Summit:

- Understand the relationship between nursing certification and patient outcomes.
 - What is certification (common definition)?
 - What about the certification process can be improved and standardized?
 - How do we provide control for "virtual" certification?
 - What are the appropriate outcomes?
 - What is critical mass (how many certified nurses do you need in a unit/organization to have a measurable outcome)?
- Measure continuing competence in nursing.
 - What is the relationship between specialty nursing certification and demonstration of competence and continuing competence?
 - How do we define competence and continuing competence?
 - What are the best methods of assessing continuing competence?
 - What should the methods be for determining the recertification process?
- Examine the relationship between the health care work environment and nursing certification/certified practice.
 - How does valuing and rewarding certification affect the work environment (job satisfaction, recruitment, retention, patient safety, etc.)?
 - Within the health care work environment, what are barriers and facilitators to achieve/maintain certification?
 - What is the cost of not supporting certified practice?
 - How do certified nurses contribute to health care system performance, which relate to organization viability and excellence (pay for performance, no reimbursement for never events, quality indicators, accreditation)?

- What are credentialing options beyond just for individual licensed practitioners i.e. teams, unlicensed personnel)?
- Determine stakeholder understanding of nursing certification and perceived value of nursing certification.
 - How do health care stakeholders view and understand nurse competency?
 - Do health care stakeholders value nurse competency?
 - How do they describe the value of nurse competency?
 - What is the impact of stakeholders' value and understanding of nurse competency?
 - Do health care stakeholders perceive a relationship between certification and competence?
 - Does the use of the word "competence" undermine the work of ABNS and certifying organizations? (Not being certified does not equate to incompetence. Is there a better word – expertise, board certified, etc.)?

A "Research Agenda" reflects the Summit objectives and incorporates:

- Identification of the "next steps" to move us forward on each of the priorities
- Opportunities for organizations to collaborate on research projects
- Organizational agreement and endorsement
- Communication and marketing plan
- Financial plan

Consensus means we will obtain agreement from Summit representatives to gain endorsement of the Research Agenda from their organizations and have them sign on to an implementation plan.

Summit Organization and Planning

Beginning in 2007, the ABNS Research Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the nursing certification literature.⁴ The findings from this review indicate that while there are a growing number of descriptive studies that include nurses' certification status, there is a need for research that will establish empirical evidence linking nursing certification to improved systems of care and patient outcomes. Building on the work of CCI in their previous Think Tanks, CCI and ABNS have chosen to work together to co-host a national Summit to create a uniform research agenda on nursing certification and continued competency.

InnovationLabs has been engaged to help facilitate the Summit. They are experts at facilitating collaborative processes to accelerate innovation. By working together in carefully designed and managed workshops, people can solve complex problems and create breakthrough solutions. They employ the use of unique physical environments called Innovation Labs™ that use dynamic collaborative events to engage every participant in the creative process.

⁴ www.nursingcertification.org/bibliography.htm

A Sponsor Group serves as the organizing committee for the Research Summit.

Members of the Sponsor Group include:

- Melissa Biel, RN, DPA – Dr. Biel is the Deputy Director of ABNS and is responsible for facilitation of the ABNS Research Committee. She serves as the PI/Program Manager for the Research Summit. Melissa has extensive experience planning, implementing and evaluating national health care conferences.
- Jacqueline Callahan, MS, CVA – Ms. Callahan is the public consumer member for ABNS. She has broad expertise in program assessment and the development of informational and educational materials, workshops and training programs for organizations to maximize staff and member professional development.
- Shannon Carter, MA, CAE – Ms. Carter is the CEO of CCI and has lead the planning and implementation of CCI's two Think Tanks that focused on continuing competence. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).
- Carol Clothier – Ms. Clothier is the Vice President for Strategic Planning and Physician Initiatives at the Federation of State Medical Boards. Carol has led the Physician Accountability for Physician Competence Initiative, a series of seven summits that engage the medical community in a dialogue about the future of health care in the United States - with the ultimate goal of answering the question: How does the profession of medicine identify, measure and evaluate the ongoing competence of its members to assure the public of its commitment to accountability?
- Michael Kaufman – Mr. Kaufman is the InnovationLabs Principal. He has over twenty years experience as a consultant working with international and national organizations in a variety of sectors, including government, IT, health care, and education. Most recently Michael and InnovationLabs facilitated the seventh in a series of summits for specialty medical professions to identify, measure and evaluate the ongoing competence of its members to assure the public of its commitment to accountability.
- Cynthia Miller Murphy, RN, MSN, CAE – Ms. Miller-Murphy is the Executive Director of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation. She is the immediate Past-President of the National Association of Competency Assurance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational, networking and advocacy resources for the credentialing community.
- Bonnie Niebuhr, RN, MS, CAE – Ms. Niebuhr is the CEO of ABNS and ABSNC, and is responsible for organizational management of these nursing certification organizations.
- Mary O'Neale, RN, MN, CNOR – Ms. O'Neale is the Director of Credentialing and Education at CCI and the ABNS President-Elect. She is responsible for planning and implementation of the biannual ABNS program conferences.

National experts/thought leaders have also been engaged to assist with Summit planning. The Expert Group consists of:

- Nancy Dunton, PhD – Dr. Dunton is a Research Associate Professor at the University of Kansas, School of Nursing. She is the Principal Investigator for the *National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators*.
- Jim Henderson, PhD – Dr. Henderson is the Executive Vice President and Chief Psychometrician at CASTLE Worldwide. He recently completed a national study on continuing competence in professional licensure and certification. He is the Chairperson of the Research Committee at the National Association of Competency Assurance (NOCA). Dr. Henderson also served as an advisor to the National Skills Standards Board, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Kathi Mooney, APRN, AOCN, PhD, FAAN – Dr. Mooney is an oncology nurse, cancer behavioral science researcher and educator. She is a professor at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City where she holds the Peery Presidential Endowed Chair in Nursing Research.
- Christine Penney, RN, PhD – Dr. Penney is Director, Policy & Quality Assurance at the College of Registered Nurses in British Columbia, Canada. A registered nurse with a PhD in Public Administration, focused on health systems accountability, she has worked in clinical practice, administration, education and health policy and research.
- Mary Smolenski, RN, EdD, MS, FNP, FAANP, CAE – Dr. Smolenski's immediate past position was Director of Certification Services at the American Nurse Credentialing Center (ANCC) where she served for eleven years directing the certification and certification renewal processes for over 150,000 nurses in over 30 specialties. She is currently a consultant whose work focuses on certification and credentialing.

Planning for the Research Summit began with the identification and validation of the important themes in nursing certification. These themes have emerged from a number of sources that include: recommendations produced from a 1996 “State of the Knowledge” conference on nursing certification hosted by the Oncology Nurses Certification Corporation (ONCC), research questions generated by the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) organizational members, a review of the literature on certification and competency, and future areas for study that emerged from the Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI) hosted Think Tanks in 2005 and 2007 on continuing competence in nursing. After a thorough review of these data sources, the ABNS Research Committee validated seven themes as representing current and future issues facing nursing certification. In January 2009 an electronic survey was sent to all ABNS member organizations, who represent nursing specialty certification organizations, affiliated testing agencies and credentialing and consumer advocate groups to validate the identified themes. Thirty-nine individuals responded to the survey and validated the themes proposed by the Research Committee.

On March 5, 2009 18 people representing the ABNS Research Committee, the project Sponsor Group and the Experts Group met in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Facilitated by InnovationLabs, this meeting was designed to validate the research themes that would

be brought forward to the October Nursing Certification and Competency Summit.⁵ The planning meeting used scenario planning to elicit thoughts on the future of nursing. The factors impacting nursing were identified and scenarios created that focused on the delivery of safe, quality patient care. Research themes were generated based on these scenarios and the identified implications for nursing. The group compared these scenario research themes with the themes validated from the themes survey. Through a series of facilitated exercises, the members of the planning group clarified and consolidated the themes. Consensus was reached on the following research themes that will serve as the basis for our work at the Research Summit:

- The relationship between certification and patient outcomes.
- Continuing competence in nursing.
- The relationship between the health care work environment and certification/certified practice.
- Stakeholder understanding of certification and perceived value of certification.

The Summit will have close to 100 participants representing nursing specialty certifying boards from the United States and Canada, as well as participants with backgrounds and experience in accreditation, competence, quality, and patient care (a list of the attendees is attached). The participant characteristics are people who have a prerequisite knowledge base of certification and the affiliated research issues, and decision makers who can commit to a research agenda on behalf of their organizations.

An Innovative Approach

With a Summit purpose to formulate a unified research agenda on nursing certification and competency, an innovative learning approach has been selected to engage all participants in the process. Therefore, the program will not utilize structured speaker presentations offered to a passive audience. The Research Summit will be facilitated by InnovationLabs, and will utilize a unique interactive 'collaborative design model' that will enable the participants to bring focus to intent; to promote inventiveness; to plan systematically; to execute in a highly skilled manner; and to find those underlying threads that allow ideas to develop. To facilitate this high level of interaction, the meeting will use an innovative collaborative planning environment called an Illumination Gallery. The Illumination Gallery provides an ongoing, physical, room-size record of the ideas being generated by the participants during the event. It also provides displays for information input so that the participants can get a sense of what information is important, how it is related to the work at hand and what has been happening in the various breakout teams during the event.

Suggested Pre-Event Readings

Prior to the Event we are asking participants to become familiar with the following materials to facilitate creative dialogue and exploration. These documents were chosen from the extensive bibliography of nursing certification literature (the entire list of documents can be accessed at: www.innovationlabs.com/research/resources.html) and

⁵ A real time record of this planning meeting can be reviewed at www.innovationlabs.com/research/reading_materials/RTR_0305_2009.pdf

should stimulate thinking about the research priorities and add value to the conversations at the Summit.

Byrne, M., Valentine, W., & Carter, S. (2004). The value of certification – A research journey. AORN Journal, 79(4), 825-835.

Cary, A.H. (2000). Data driven policy: The case for certification research. Policy, Politics and Nursing Practice, 1(3), 165-171.

Frank-Stromberg, M., Ward, S., Hughes, L., Brown, K., Coleman, A., Grindel, C.G., et al. (2002). Does certification status of oncology nurses make a difference in patient outcomes? Oncology Nursing Forum, 29(4), 665-672.

Hart, S, Bergquist, S, Gajewski, B., & Dunton, N. (2006). Reliability testing of the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators pressure ulcer indicator. Journal of Nursing Care Quality, 21(3), 256-265.

Niebuhr, B. & Biel, M. (2007). The value of specialty nursing certification. *Nursing Outlook*, 55(4), 176-181.

Redd, M.L., & Alexander, J.W. (1997). Does certification mean better performance? Nursing Management, 28(2), 45-49.

Ridge, R. (2008). Nursing certification as a workforce strategy. Nursing Management, August.

Sponsors

ABNS and CCI thank our sponsors for their support of this event:

American Board of Perianesthesia Nursing Certification, Inc.
American Nurses Credentialing Center
Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc.
Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing
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Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board
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National Board of Certification and Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists
Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation
Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board
Pediatric Nursing Certification Board
Professional Examination Service
Prometric
Schroeder Measurement Technologies, Inc.

Summit Attendees

Name		Organization
Alexander	Mary	INCC
Alexander	Maryann	NCSBN
Allen	Cynthia	SeaCrest Company
Allison	MaryMoon	ANCC
Bailey	Shelley	Schroeder Measurement Technologies, Inc.
Barger	Mary	AMCB
Berry	Patricia	University of Utah College of Nursing
Biel	Melissa	ABNS
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Carter	Shannon	CCI
Chornick	Nancy	NCSBN
Conklin	Phoebe	ABPANC
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Dignam	Monica	ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership
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Fellows	Jane	WOCNCB
Fowler	Susan	ABNN
Gallagher	Patrick	Applied Measurement Professional
Gapinski	Mary Ann	NBCSN
Grief	C. Lynne	BCEN
Harris	Amy	ONCB
Harrison	Peg	PNCB
Hartigan	Carol	AACN Certification Corporation
Harvey	Karen	AACN Certification Corporation
Hastings-Tolsma	Marie	AMCB
Henderson	James	CASTLE Worldwide, Inc
Hnatiuk	Cynthia	MSNCB
Hoxie	Lance	NCBDE
Hunt	Christopher	INCC
Jones	Patrick	ABPANC
Kendzel	Jim	NOCA
King	Cathleen	RNCB
Krishna	Vijay	American National Standards Institute
Lachat	Ann	ABOHN
LaRiche	Jeffrey	CASTLE Worldwide, Inc.
Leahy	Julia	Prometric
Lentz	Judy	NBCHPN
Linder	Lauri	ONCC
Lofty	Tracy	AACN
Lundmark	Vicki	ANCC

Macdonald	Karen	ANCC
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Muenzen	Pat	Professional Examination Service
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Niebuhr	Bonnie	ABNS
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Penney	Christine	College of Registered Nurses in British Columbia, Canada
Penny	James	CASTLE Worldwide, Inc.
Plaus	Karen	NBCRNA
Reiter	Suzanne	NCC
Ricci	Marilyn	ABNN
Richbourg	Leanne	WOCNCB
Roberts	Dottie	ONCB
Salavec	Lorraine	BBCEN
Schafer	Sandra Lee	NBCHPN
Schroeter	Kathryn	CCI
Schwant	Barbara	ABCGN
Shirey	Maria	AACN Certification Corporation
Smith	I.Leon	Professional Examination Service
Smolenski	Mary	Certification Consultant
Sperhac	Arlene	PNCB
Stanbery	Tancy	BCEN
Starkweather	Angela	ABNN
Stewart	Jackie	BCEN
Sussex	Mary	ALNCCB
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Facilitation Team

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Kaufman	Michael	InnovationLabs
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