A Position Statement on Nursing Certification

The American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN) supports specialty certification.[a] In addition, ASPAN, in collaboration with the American Board of Perianesthesia Certification (ABPANC), supports specialty certification and recertification of perianesthesia registered nurses as one strategy to ensure ongoing clinical knowledge and skills as a means of improving the quality and safety of the care delivered.

Background

Certification, as defined by the American Board of Nursing Specialties,[1] is the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards and predetermined eligibility criteria identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes. Furthermore, nursing specialty certification includes sufficient practical experience and passing a certification examination that provides external validation of knowledge and judgment.[2] Most importantly, nursing certification exists to protect the public. Specialty nursing certification validates nursing knowledge and ensures nurses are competent in applying specialty standards to clinical practice.[3,4] The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) formerly the Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2000 landmark report, *To Err is Human,* created a growing concern in hospitals about the quality and safety of patient care.[5] It is imperative that we think beyond initial licensure and promote continuing competence as a means of promoting safe patient care. Perianesthesia nursing certification is one way of ensuring ongoing clinical knowledge and skills to enhance patient care.

In facilities that employ higher numbers of certified nurses, researchers found:

- validation of specialized knowledge beyond licensure
- indication of clinical competence
- enhancement of professional credibility
- attainment of a practice standard
- professional growth
- evidence of professional commitment
- evidence of accountability[1]

Without continuing knowledge and skills beyond initial licensure, errors within the healthcare field may occur.[6] An estimated 210,000-440,000 United States patients die prematurely each year as a result of preventable adverse events in the hospital and many more experience serious harm without death.[7] Nurses' knowledge and skills have a direct impact on quality and safety of patient care and certification has the potential to improve the processes of healthcare delivery.[8]

Position

Perianesthesia nursing certification, sponsored by ABPANC and endorsed by ASPAN, is designed to promote and enhance the quality of care delivered

to patients receiving anesthesia, sedation or analgesia. Board certified postanesthesia registered nurses (CPAN®) and certified ambulatory perianesthesia registered nurses (CAPA®) have validated specialized nursing knowledge to advocate on behalf of patients across the lifespan to address their physiological, behavioral health, cognitive, and safety needs in a variety of settings throughout the perianesthesia continuum of care.

Nursing institutions, hospitals, and ambulatory care facilities should:

- advocate for nurses to obtain and maintain specialty perianesthesia nursing certification to demonstrate expertise in current standards of perianesthesia care
- support nurses in obtaining and maintaining perianesthesia certification and recertification by providing preparation courses
- provide continuing professional development and career advancement opportunities for certified nurses
- recognize perianesthesia nursing certification as a requirement or an achievement for a professional clinical ladder
- encourage certified nurses to introduce themselves to patients, families, and healthcare colleagues as board certified
- publicly recognize nurses (individuals and groups) within the organization who have obtained certification or recertification (e.g., notice in local newspaper, displaying plaques in public areas)

Expected Outcomes

ASPAN and ABPANC recognize the importance of advancing nursing knowledge and skills. Certification provides nurses with an opportunity to be recognized for achieving a higher level of competence. Certified postanesthesia registered nurses (CPAN®) and certified ambulatory perianesthesia registered nurses (CAPA®) are the gold standard of perianesthesia certification. Organizations that support the validation of nursing knowledge through specialty certification and recertification are ensuring quality care and protecting patients. ASPAN and ABPANC will encourage healthcare and consumer organizations to offer endorsement of this position and advocate for increased support of perianesthesia nursing certification.

Approval of Statement

This statement was endorsed by a vote of the ASPAN Board of Directors on November 11, 2017, in Pompano Beach, Florida, and approved by a vote of the ASPAN Representative Assembly on April 29, 2018, in Anaheim, California.

This position statement was updated and revised at the October 2019 meeting of the Standards and Guidelines Strategic Work Team in Dallas, Texas.

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ADDITIONAL READING

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