

ABNS Announces Recipient of 2011 Award for Nursing Certification Advocacy

AURORA, Ohio, March 22, 2011 | The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) Awards and Recognition Committee announced during the organization's Spring Assembly meeting that it has selected the East Jefferson General Hospital (EJGH), Critical Care Division in Metairie, LA as the recipient of the 2011 Award for Nursing Certification Advocacy. The award recognizes health care organizations, facilities or departments that are strong advocates of specialty nursing certification.

"We received a record number of applications for the award this year from candidates who demonstrated their dedication to supporting specialty certification for nurses," Judy Lentz, Chair of the ABNS Awards Committee, said. "It was difficult to choose a winner, but East Jefferson General Hospital's Critical Care Division clearly exemplified the characteristics of a unit worthy of this prestigious honor."

Among the criteria necessary to receive the Advocacy Award, the organization must document the total number of direct patient care RNs and nursing managers and the number and percentage who are certified in specialty nursing. Approximately 24 percent of direct caregivers and 80 percent of the nursing management in the Critical Care Division at EJGH are certified.

"We certainly noted the high percentage of nurse managers and direct care givers who have earned specialty certification," Lentz noted, "But even more impressive was this division's organizational culture—a culture that supports certification through reimbursement and loan programs and provides personal encouragement and recognition of the nurse's achievement. These are the factors that help make earning and maintaining certification possible."

Other criteria for the Advocacy Award include how the organization or unit supports certification through strategies such as financial reimbursement, requiring certification for new hires, offering paid time off for continuing education, pay differentials, events to honor certificants, etc. The EJGH Critical Care Division promotes certification with a variety of programs, including:

- Establishing specialty nursing certification as a mandatory criterion in the EJGH clinical ladder;
- Preferring credentials in hiring;
- Reimbursing full and part-time nurses for certification exam and recertification fees;
- Offering free exam review courses;

- Providing paid time off to attend certification review and continuing education courses;
- Establishing Certification Resource Loan Programs to provide study materials;
- Developing onsite continuing education programs;
- Offering certified nurses on the career ladder pay differentials;
- Holding events honoring certified nurses that focus on the message, “we value our certified nurses,” and unveiling a “Wall of Honor” for certified nurses; and
- Encouraging participation in regional and national professional organizations.

“In evaluating our workforce and the healthcare needs of our community, it is evident that nurses who are certified in their specialty are especially poised to meet the demands of today’s healthcare environment,” Mark Peters, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of EJGH, said. “The value we have historically placed on nursing certification is affirmed as we continue to build a team engaged in professional development and prepared to bring innovation to the bedside to improve patient outcomes.”

In 2010, EJGH conducted a survey of the nursing staff to examine nursing knowledge and skill regarding evidence-based practice. The results indicated that certified nurses were more aware of and more likely to have used the hospital’s library services, nurse researchers and other tools available for implementing evidence in practice. The results also showed that certified nurses are more familiar with the concept of evidence-based practice and are more likely to make sure that every day practice is evidence based by comparing practice against published professional guidelines.

“We believe these findings suggest nurses certified in their specialty are better positioned to critically evaluate and implement evidence into practice to improve patient outcomes,” Beth Lacoste and Nicole Jones, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Critical Care Division, said.

Through efforts such as those demonstrated by the EJGH Critical Care Division, the ABNS Vision - Specialty nursing care is *the* standard by which the public recognizes quality nursing care - will be achieved.

“Professional nursing certification at East Jefferson is truly valued and supported through various means,” Janice Kishner, RN, MSN, MBA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, said. “Through certification, nurses demonstrate their mastery of skills, knowledge and abilities as they progress along the continuum of lifelong learning.”

For more information on the requirements of the award, visit www.nursingcertification.org.

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Editors Note:

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) is a membership organization whose mission is to promote the value of specialty nursing certification to all stakeholders. Currently, 32 ABNS Regular Member represent nearly half a million specialty certified registered nurses. Its 12 Affiliate Members include providers of key certification–related testing products and services. One Public Member represents the consumer’s perspectives on issues about specialty nursing certification. For further information about ABNS, visit www.nursingcertification.org or email Bonnie Niebuhr, MS, RN, CAE, Chief Executive Officer, at abns@nursingcertification.org.

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