



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.

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 was 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. InnovationLabs employs the use of unique physical environments that use dynamic collaborative events to engage every participant in the creative process.

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 a content 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

⁴ www.nursingcertification.org/bibliography.htm

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

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 then reached on the following research priorities that served 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.

Nursing Certification and Competency Research Summit

Taking the next steps to establish an empirical basis for nursing certification, CCI, in partnership with the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS), convened a *Nursing Certification and Competency Summit* October 7-9, 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland. The event brought together 87 participants who represented nursing certification organizations, affiliated credentialing agencies, testing companies and consumer advocates.

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

The Summit objectives were 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.

Research Agenda

As a result of the collaborative work done by the Summit participants, a research agenda was formed. The purpose of the research agenda is to promote research that investigates the contribution of nursing certification to health care. Through an innovative, iterative design process⁶, the group developed and gained consensus on three overarching research priorities that serve as the framework for future research projects. The priorities are: the impact of certification on patient outcomes; continuing competence in nursing; and the health care work environment and certification. These priorities were used to generate ideas for potential research projects and are listed below.

⁶ A record of the design process can be found at www.innovationlabs.com/research.

<u>Priorities</u>	<u>Projects</u>
Patient Outcomes	Nursing certification and its impact on adverse events, symptom relief, failure to rescue, and other outcome-specific topics.
Continuing Competence	Best practices, methods, frequency and processes for recertification.
Work Environment	Critical thinking skills of certified nurses.

While not the final research projects or questions, these topics serve as a direction for future research. Using strategies identified by the Summit participants, ABNS will continue to refine the questions and work with content experts to design the projects.

Some projects were initially defined as potential research projects, but after further conversation the collective opinion of the group was that these issues could be better addressed using marketing and communication strategies. These topics included:

- Consumer/RN Awareness of the value of certification
- Employer value of certification

ABNS will incorporate the marketing of these issues into its strategic plan.

Key Characteristics/ Critical Elements/Values

Through Summit activities and discussions, a number of key characteristics emerged that were validated to be critical elements and/or values of a unified research agenda. These included:

- Certification is a marker of professional development
- Research on nursing certification can be a collaborative process that is inclusive of a variety of stakeholders and partners
- Future research will build on previous work
- We will commit to research that will drive improvements and refine the certification and recertification processes
- Consensus will be reached on definitions and measurements for certification

Next Steps

Summit attendees agreed to a number of next steps that will move us forward toward implementing the research agenda.

- ABNS member organizations will be asked to support/endorse the research agenda. (A draft document that outlines our work at the Summit and requests the involvement of each member board will be made available to assist with this process.)
- The ABNS Board will examine the proposed structure of creating and staffing a non-profit foundation to support the research agenda.
- The ABNS Board will develop a funding model to present to the ABNS members that will be used to financially support the implementation of the research agenda.

- The ABNS Research Committee will review the consensus recommendations made for each research priority and establish a plan(s) to pursue specific research projects. Recommendations will include funding options and desired partnerships.
- The marketing and communication strategies that identify the value of certification for consumers/public, employers and nurses will be incorporated into the ABNS strategic plan. A marketing consultant will be engaged, and the PR Committee will be tasked with monitoring this initiative.
- Options for a certification database will be explored. The ABNS Board will develop a strategy to further examine the options for a nursing certification database.
- The ABNS Research Committee will be asked to develop a definition of competency and continuing competency in specialty nursing through a review and synthesis of existing literature on the topic.

Summit Attendees

Name		Organization
Alexander	Mary	INCC
Allen	Cynthia	SeaCrest Company
Bailey	Shelley	Schroeder Measurement Technologies, Inc.
Barger	Mary	AMCB
Berry	Patricia	University of Utah College of Nursing
Biel	Melissa	ABNS
Briars	Rosemary	NCBDE
Brown	Carlton	ONCC
Burns	Dianna	ABCGN
Byrne	Michelle	CCI
Callahan	Jacqueline	Callahan & Associates, LLC
Carroll	Nancy	NCC
Carter	Shannon	CCI
Chornick	Nancy	NCSBN
Conklin	Phoebe	ABPANC
Counts	Caroline	NNCB
Coyle-Rogers	Patricia	ANCC
Craig	Maureen	NNCB
Dawadi	Bhaskar	Schroeder Measurement Technologies, Inc.
Diehl-Svrjcek	Beth	AALNC/ALNCCB
Dignam	Monica	ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership
Eisemon	Nancy	ABCGN
Fabrey	Lawrence	Applied Measurement Professional
Fellows	Jane	WOCNCB
Fortenberry	Jackie	NBCRNA
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
Lundmark	Vicki	ANCC
Macdonald	Karen	ANCC
Martinez	Jeanne	NBCHPN

McSteen	Kerstin	NBCHPN
Meadows	M.T.	AONE
Miller	Peggy	University of Kansas Medical Center
Miller Murphy	Cyndi	ONCC
Mooney	Kathi	University of Utah College of Nursing
Muenzen	Pat	Professional Examination Service
Nason	Karen	RNCB
Niebuhr	Bonnie	ABNS
Norton	Vicki	ONCC
O'Neale	Mary	CCI
Paskewitz	Kathy	ABPANC
Patry	Leslie Ann	CNA
Pedigo	Robert	CASTLE Worldwide, Inc.
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	BCEN
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
Tan	Rachel	Schroeder Measurement Technologies, Inc.
Thompkins	Diane	ANCC
Ward	Cynthia	MSNCB
Waters	Linda	Prometric
Wyatt	Janet	PNCB

Facilitation Team

Name		Organization
Castiglioni	Diane	InnovationLabs
Hostetler	Chad	Illumination Galleries
Kaufman	Michael	InnovationLabs
Morris	Langdon	InnovationLabs
Smethurst	Jay	InnovationLabs