American Board of Nursing Specialties

Credentialing Research

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Mission

• ABNS promotes the value of specialty nursing certification to all stakeholders
Vision

• Specialty nursing certification is THE standard by which the public recognizes quality nursing care
History

• Incorporated in 1991

• Initial goal: to serve as an advocate for consumer protection by setting standards for the formal recognition of nursing certification programs
History

- Reorganization 1999 - 2000

- ABNS created as a *membership* organization with an *accreditation* function

- Has 33 regular member organizations and 13 affiliate member organizations
History

• 2009: a separate corporation created for accreditation activities – Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification, Inc. (ABSNC)

• Enabled ABNS to seek a change to its tax status
• 2011: reclassified to a 501(c)(3); ABSNC remained a 501(c)(6)
Credential Programs and Certificants

• **653,074** certified RNs and **114** credential programs
  - RN Practice – 24 organizations offer 81 credentials (421,959 certificants)
  - Advanced Practice – 11 organizations offer 33 credentials (231,115 certificants)
Accreditation

• The only accrediting body specifically for nursing certification

• **55** accredited credentials from **18** different nursing credentialing organizations
ABNS Commitment to Research

- Research is part of our strategic plan

- **ABNS advances knowledge regarding specialty nursing certification through research**
ABNS Research Committee

• Consists of representatives from member organizations
• Have identified the benefit of a shared research agenda
• Participate in organization-wide research projects that benefit nursing credentialing research
• Shared research liaison with ICE (Institute for Credentialing Excellence)
• Over a decade ago, ABNS member organizations identified research priorities

• Based on these priorities, the Research Committee undertook a national study to validate nurses’ perceptions, values, and behaviors related to certification
Value of Nursing Certification Study

Purpose

To identify the:

• Perceptions of the value of certified nursing

• Benefits and rewards to nurses for certification

• Challenges and barriers to certification
Value of Nursing Certification Study (cont’d)

- 20 ABNS organizations participated
- 11,427 responded (12% return rate)
- 75% held one or more certifications
- 25% did not hold a certification
- 36 different credentials represented
Perceived Value of Certification Tool©

• The survey incorporated the Perceived Value of Certification Tool (PVCT)©

• PVCT© developed, validated, and copyrighted by the Competency & Credentialing Institute

• A reliable tool consisting of 18 certification-related value statements, and a five-point Likert scale response
Results

• High levels of agreement among certified nurses, non-certified nurses, and Nurse Managers that certification is greatly valued

• Certified nurses agree with a majority of the certification value statements (p<.01)

• Nurse Managers clearly supported the value of certification
Value of Nursing Certification Study (Summary)

• Certification is a valuable method for nurses to differentiate themselves in the workplace.

• Health care organizations offer certification incentives to attract and retain professional, certified nurses.

• Yet, nurses continue to face challenges and barriers to obtain and maintain certification.
Research

Following the success of the Value Study, ABNS member organizations were interested in conducting more collaborative research projects.

Fall 2009, ABNS and CCI (The Competency & Credentialing Institute) hosted the Nursing Certification and Competency Research Summit.
Nursing Certification and Competency Research Summit

• **Purpose:** to obtain consensus on a unified research agenda in support of nursing certification

• **Objectives:**
  • Identify plans for certifying agencies to adopt research agenda
  • Design communication and marketing plan to disseminate key messages about agenda
  • Develop funding plan to support research agenda
Research Agenda Priorities

Gained consensus on 3 research priorities that serve as the *framework* for future research:

1. The impact of certification on patient outcomes
2. Continuing competence in nursing
3. The health care work environment and certification
Next Steps

- ABNS Research Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the nursing certification literature
Findings

• 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
Research Agenda – Current Study

• National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI®) Certification Research Study

• ABNS (and 26 ABNS members) partnering with American Association of Critical Care Nurses/AACN Certification Corporation
• Study conducted in two phases, began fall 2010
• Dr. Diane Boyle, NDNQI Principal Investigator
NDNQI

• Part of ANA’s Patient Safety and Quality of Care Initiative

• Provides comparative data for QI activities

• Provides data resource for investigating relationships between nursing and patient outcomes
Research Agenda

NDNQI® Certification Research Study (Phase I)

Objective:
To examine specialty certification trends by hospital Magnet® cohort (i.e., Magnet, non-Magnet, initial year of Magnet) and patient care unit type (e.g., critical care, step-down, medical, surgical, etc.).
Purpose of NDNQI® Study

• Identify characteristics of specialty certified RNs within the NDNQI® database
• Identify differences from non-certified nurses
• Specialty certified RNs in acute care hospitals (2003 – 2009)
• Hospital characteristics
• Unit types
Data Collected

- 1,796 hospitals
- Nurses > 50% time direct patient care
- On unit for > 3 months
- Agency, contract, traveler excluded
- Hold certifications relevant to RNs in direct patient care
Findings

• Magnet hospitals had higher certification rates
• Regardless of Magnet status, pediatric units, adult critical care, and adult rehabilitation had the highest certification rates
• Once hospitals achieved Magnet recognition, they continued to strive for increasing nursing competence after licensure
Findings (cont’d)

• The percent of direct care RNs on patient care units holding specialty certifications has increased significantly since 2004
NDNQI® has moved us forward on the research agenda

- Results reveal information on nursing certification in acute care hospitals
- Serves as a foundation for future work
- Phase I findings are useful for planning, comparison, benchmarking, and trending data
Research Agenda

NDNQI® Certification Research Study (Phase II)

• Examined relationship between certification rates and patient outcomes on inpatient units

• Example of findings: As nurse specialty certification rates increased, fall rates decreased or slowed

• Showed need for Phase III
NDNQI® Phase III Study

• ABNS Research Committee has requested a proposal for a **Phase III** study that will examine patient outcomes along the care continuum and the effect of rates of nursing certification at the unit level and/or hospital level
Research Committee: Synthesis Project

- 8 studies that link improved patient outcomes with certification: workplace empowerment, falls, reduced complications, staging of pressure ulcers
- ABNS Research Committee completing a synthesis of these studies
- Plan to publish the results of synthesis project with recommendations for future research
What We Know

• Confusion/inconsistency regarding a unified definition of what constitutes certification

• Identification of the impact of certified nurses in existing studies is serendipitous

• Lack of empirical understanding of what constitutes certified nursing practice and the variables that influence practice
What We Know (cont’d)

• No model exists to demonstrate the relationship between certified nursing practice and patient outcomes
• Limited theoretical support for certification studies
• Sampling techniques are limited mostly to convenience samples
Research Methodology Challenges

• How do we examine the relationship between certification and competence?

• Not being certified ≠ incompetence

• Measurement of individual certification practice (one nurse = unit of analysis)
Research Methodology Challenges

• Multiple confounding variables impact patient outcomes; certification is inextricable

• Inconsistent and inadequate data on certification
Research Methodology Challenges

• Potential misconception that certification can be studied as a nominal variable
• Study designs fail to yield a rich understanding of what constitutes certified practice

• Tend to study certified nursing practice within limited organizational contexts such as hospitals, primarily studying staff nurses
How To Address Challenges

• Measure certification at unit, school, office, or hospital, facility, agency level versus by individual certificant
• Agree upon and support consistent definition of “certification”
• Support ongoing data collection on certified practice (NDNQI database)
How To Address Challenges (Cont’d)

• Examine certified practice along a continuum of patient care (NDNQI Study Phase III)

• Engage the credentialing community to partner on research efforts
How To Address Challenges (Cont’d)

• Consider nontraditional research methodologies (practice based evidence – Dr. Susan Horn, a framework for clinical practice improvement that looks at the health care process to improve patient outcomes)
ABNS

Promoting Excellence in Nursing Certification

Thank you