Future Directions of Credentialing Research in Nursing: Workshop Summary

An Overview
Statement of Task

The workshop focused on short- and long-term strategies to advance the field of nurse and organization credentialing research, including a conceptual framework and research agenda to evaluate the impacts of nurse and organization credentialing, with an emphasis on nurse and patient outcomes. Other topics include:

- Emergent priorities for research in nursing credentialing;
- Critical knowledge gaps and methodological limitations in the field;
- Promising developments in research methodologies, health metrics, and data infrastructures to better evaluate the impact of nursing credentialing; and
- Short- and long-term strategies to encourage continued activity in nursing credentialing research.
Planning Committee

• Bobbie Berkowitz (Chair), Columbia University School of Nursing
• Linda Burnes Bolton, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
• Robert Dittus, Vanderbilt University
• Karen Drenkard, GetWellNetwork, Inc.
• Lynne Grief, Blake Medical Center
• Kenneth W. Kizer, University of California, Davis
• Jack Needleman, University of California, Los Angeles
• Robin Newhouse, University of Maryland School of Nursing
• Joanne Spetz, University of California, San Francisco
• Joan Stanley, American Association of Colleges of Nursing
Disclosure

The planning committee’s role was limited to planning the workshop. The workshop summary was prepared by workshop rapporteurs as a factual summary of what occurred at the workshop.

Statements, recommendations, and opinions expressed were those of individual presenters and participants, and were not necessarily endorsed or verified by the Institute of Medicine; they should not be construed as reflecting any group consensus.
Theme 1. A Shared Research Framework

A common vision or conceptual model is needed to advance the field of nursing credentialing research by framing important research questions that respond to different stakeholder needs.

- Current research on nursing credentialing research is limited and inconsistent.
- Determining the impact of nursing credentialing on institutions, nurses, and patient outcomes should be a primary goal of any national agenda.
ANCC Research Council Model for Credentialing Research

SOURCE: Lundmark et al., 2012
The Expanded Conceptual Model (ECM)

SOURCE: Needleman et al., 2014
Breakout Group Ideas: Modifications to ECM

• Reflect the pervasive influence of teams and inter-professional collaboration on work environments and health professionals;
• Represent the layers of organization (e.g., units, operating rooms) that intervene between institutions and individual nurses;
• Account for the “invisible” and visible architecture, which may include norms and expectations about credentialing set by leadership;
• Indicate elements in the environment that affect individuals and institutions;
• Reflect the role of payers and professional organizations which, again, have multiple influences;
• Capture the richness of what nurses do and include a temporal element (recent graduates versus experienced nurses) that reflects career paths and re-credentialing patterns;
• Expand the number of feedback loops; and
• Differentiate between what is measured in the credentialing process and how it relates to competency or capability.
Theme 2. Improved Data Availability, Harmonization, and Interoperability

More standardized data, performance measures, and data collection procedures are needed to improve interoperability, which could enhance research in the field of nursing credentialing.

- Nursing credentialing research requires extensive data—not simply more of it, but complex data sets to control for numerous intervening and possibly confounding variables.
- Credentialing research in nursing requires greater data harmonization and interoperability.
- A common data model could identify consistent definitions and strategies to answer specific research questions across organizations, systems, and databases.
Theme 3. Examine Causality

Determining the value of nursing credentialing requires research designs and methods that can explore the causal links between evidence-based practice, nurse certification or nursing credentialing, and relevant health-related outcomes.

• Causal pathways can be used to explore the link between nursing credentialing and improved outcomes.
• Research must determine whether the process of nursing credentialing or other factors associated with nursing credentialing influence health-related outcomes.
• Although causality is important, it may be sufficient to demonstrate that credentialing encourages evidence-based practices, which lead to improved outcomes.
Simplified Conceptual Model of Credentialing Pathway

Credentialing process

Enhanced:
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitudes

Improved:
- Workplace behavior
- Organization of work tasks
- Architecture of work environment

Earlier recognition and intervention resulting in better patient outcomes

Source: Romano, 2014
Theme 4. The Changing Roles of Nurses in a Complex Health Care Environment

The field of nursing is changing in response to increasingly complex and dynamic health care services across different health care delivery structures and care settings, which affects research strategies.

- Performance assessment methodologies must be more dynamic to respond to this changing health care environment.
- Emerging technologies may fundamentally change the practice of nursing and some certification requirements may not adequately reflect the changing knowledge and skill sets required to practice in today’s health care environment.
- The ACA has created new opportunities for nurses and research to help “better understand the role that nurses play.”
Theme 5. Credentialing Research and Other Health Care Improvement Initiatives

Research on nursing credentialing may contribute to, as well as benefit from, diverse health care quality improvement activities within the United States.

- The ACA has expanded the sources of data available to better explain the current and future role of nurses in the U.S. health care system and improve credentialing research.
- Previous efforts to promote a culture of excellence and integrated health care systems could be used as a model to develop a national focus for credentialing research.
- Nursing credentialing research is also subject to larger forces within the health care system, such as payment reform, communication strategies, and marketplace factors.
Theme 6. Additional Resources to Advance Research

Promising advances in data collection, health informatics, data infrastructures, and research designs will require additional resources.

• Alternative funding strategies are needed.
  ✓ Upgrading data environments to improve interoperability and the costs associated with nursing credentialing are expensive.
  ✓ Good causal research requires sustained funding.
• Different stakeholders value credentialing differently, which should be accounted for in support strategies.
• In addition to financial support, workshop participants noted the potential role of independent bodies to prioritize different long- and short-term strategies.
## Different Stakeholders Value Credentialing Differently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nurse</th>
<th>Delivery Organization</th>
<th>Oversight Organization</th>
<th>Credentialing Organization</th>
<th>Consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advance safety</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve quality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve processes of care</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify and define the roles and work of nurses and other team members</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide professional support</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape future practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve job satisfaction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve recruitment and retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Needleman, 2014.
Breakout Group Ideas: Most Important Knowledge Gaps

• What additional descriptive information about nursing credentialing and certification can be developed, including how many people are certified, what certifications do they have, and how are certifications distributed?
• What is the value of a credential to an individual nurse?
• What is the economic value to the organization for employing credentialed nurses?
• Does certification improve nurses’ ability to implement evidence-based practices?
• Which credentials matter for which outcomes?
Breakout Group Ideas: Improving Access to Sufficient Data

- Adopt a common data model and standardized method for data collection.
- Collect minimum dataset elements by state boards of nursing in their re-licensure surveys.
- Add credentialing information to employers’ human resource databases.
- Improve researcher access to existing (and new) data through public use datasets, using de-identified data, if necessary, from state boards of nursing.
- Use standardized, organization-specific data on patient outcomes.
Breakout Group Ideas: Short- & Long-Term Strategies to Encourage Activity

• Get data house and information management tools in order.
• Identify data gaps and strategies to fill them, along with useful information management tools and refining the data resources.
• Develop and implement a strategic communications plan.
• Consider a range of possible funders for this effort and make an effective case for these investments.
• Build research capacity and infrastructure among the nurse credentialing organizations to promote consistent research over time.
• Identify which research methods appear better able to answer the most pressing questions after a sufficient number of studies can be compared.
• Consider using mandates—such as California’s required nurse staffing ratios—to stimulate research in related areas.
Breakout Group Ideas: Outreach and Communication

- Review stakeholders, including payers, employers, new nurses, risk managers, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, nursing faculty, academia, accreditation and regulatory agencies, patients, and families.
- Develop a broad-based promotional campaign aimed at informing the public about the value of having a certified nurse.
- Create a standardized taxonomy for certification.
- Engage risk managers specifically with respect to the need for research, and if research validates the importance of certification, what that importance is.
- Develop transition-to-practice programs for new nurses that culminate in obtaining certification.
Thank You!

- Pre-pub Released January 7, 2015.
- Final summary due for release by March 31, 2015.
- Free PDFs of the summary are available: www.nap.edu