



Position Statement

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Emergency Nursing Certification

Description

In developed countries, there has been a shift in the trajectory of healthcare over the last decade from the traditional medical model to one that focuses more on organizational and managerial approaches toward promoting high quality care.¹ For example, in the U.S., the role that nurses play in providing quality care and improving patient outcomes has been subject to increased scrutiny since the passing of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, which shifted the focus of U.S. healthcare from a producer-centered, volume-driven system to a consumer-centered, outcomes-driven system.² Professional specialty certification is one method by which nurses can demonstrate that they have achieved a level of knowledge and clinical acumen necessary to provide quality care in their specialty.³ Professional specialty certification represents a higher level of competency and knowledge beyond basic nursing preparation, therefore demonstrating expertise in a specialty.^{4,5}

“The Value of Certification Study”, conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) and commissioned by the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN®), was the first large-scale, rigorous study examining the value of emergency nursing certification to the nurses, their patients, and their employers.⁴ Study results were based on a regression analysis of survey data from over 8,800 certified and non-certified emergency nurses and over 1,000 emergency supervisors. Outcomes of value from Certified Emergency Nurse (CEN) certification to the individual emergency nurses included the following: higher annual pay, job advancement, employability, and nursing self-efficacy, even after controlling for level of education and years of experience. These results support prior studies that reported that specialty certifications in nursing are associated with increased nurse satisfaction and empowerment.^{6,7,8} Outcomes of value from CEN certification to the nurses’ employers reported by “The Value of Certification Study” included multiple aspects of higher technical performance, accuracy, and ethical behavior.⁴ These results supported those of previous studies that reported increased numbers of nurses with specialty certifications were associated with decreased patient mortality and failure to rescue,^{9,10} lower rates of catheter-associated urinary tract infections,¹¹ and lower rates of central line bloodstream infections and ventilator-associated pneumonia.¹² Preliminary findings from “The Value of Certification Study” can be found within the BCEN White Paper for Emergency Nurses entitled, “Five Compelling Reasons to Get (and Keep) your Emergency Nursing Specialty Certification.”⁴

ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that:

1. Specialty certification and credentials represent excellence in emergency nursing.
2. Specialty certification benefits nurses, patients, and employers.
3. Attainment of emergency nursing certification contributes to the delivery of safe, effective, quality care.



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4. Practice environments that encourage and facilitate emergency nursing certification and continuing education opportunities promote improved patient outcomes and greater nursing satisfaction.
5. Certification and credentials integrated into professional advancement models are a means to recognize specialized knowledge and clinical judgment.
6. Healthcare institutions support both the initial certification and renewal certification of their emergency nursing workforce.
7. Nurses who have successfully achieved specialty certification have earned the privilege to use and professionally display credentials following their name, including on their identification badges.
8. Research specific to and regarding the relationship of emergency nursing certification to safe, effective, quality practice, and to both nurse and patient satisfaction, is essential.

Background

In the complex, time-pressured and dynamic environment of the emergency department, it is especially crucial that emergency nurses engage in continuing education to remain aware of current knowledge and best practices. Specialty certification is a method for validating the knowledge, skills, and competencies unique to specific populations supported by the National Academy of Medicine,² formerly the Institute of Medicine, and is recognized as a strong benchmark for quality in Magnet-recognized organizations.¹³ Emergency nurses may attain specialty certification by exam through the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN) as a generalist (CEN), flight nurse (CFRN), critical care ground transport nurse (CTRN), pediatric emergency nurse (CPEN) and trauma nurse (TCRN).¹⁴ Emergency nurse practitioners may attain an Emergency Nurse Practitioner Certification (ENP-C) through a program offered by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners in collaboration with the American Academy of Emergency Nurse Practitioners.¹⁵

Barriers found in research regarding the value of specialty nursing certification include the lack of a universal taxonomy for professional certifications in nursing and the complexity of research that enables merging of nurse, patient, and institution-specific data.^{2,16} Large scale, generalizable research that examines the value of specialty nursing certification to patient outcomes is complex. It requires the merging of information from large datasets, such as the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators, which captures nursing- and unit-specific data, with information from others, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Healthcare Safety Network or the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Survey, which capture patient outcome data.¹⁶

In today's value-based healthcare system, the quality of care—and of those who provide that care—are continuously being examined. Professional certification clearly benefits the individual emergency nurse, the patients they serve, and the healthcare institution. Existing research suggests that an association of certification to patient outcomes exists, but this relationship is not fully understood and requires further research. However, the intrinsic rewards of professional certification such as the sense of competence and empowerment it offers nurses, and the credibility it offers healthcare institutions, are well supported by the existing literature.



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Resources

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