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## **A Position Statement on the Value of Certification in Neuroscience Nursing**

**Date: April 20, 2015**

### **Description**

Certification, as defined by the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS, 2006), is the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes.

### **Position**

It is the position of the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) that

- certification demonstrates specialized knowledge in the respective specialty area.
- the preparation process for a specialty certification examination provides the nurse with review of detailed education addressing multiple areas of practice and knowledge within that specialty.
- the accomplishment of certification is the culmination of knowledge and experience that are reflected in successful passage of the specialty examination.

### **Background**

Certification is the “voluntary process by which a non-governmental entity grants recognition and use of a credential to an individual after verifying that he or she has met predetermined and standardized criteria. It is the vehicle that a profession uses to differentiate among its members, using standards, sometimes developed through a consensus-driven process, based on existing legal and psychometric requirements” (McHugh et al., 2014,p.2; National Organization for Competency Assurance, 2005.p.5). It is hypothesized that credentialing leads to higher quality of care, more uniform practice, and improved patient outcomes (Hickey 2014). Many nurses pursue certification for its intrinsic values, including enhanced feelings of personal accomplishment and evidence of professional commitment. Certification is also an accepted method of validating that nurses have the knowledge, skills, and abilities fundamental to accomplishing their role functions (ABNS, 2006).

### **Rationale**

AANN recognizes neuroscience nursing practice as a nursing specialty. The American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) appreciated the need for certification of professional nurses involved in the practice of neuroscience nursing and its subspecialties, and the neuroscience nursing certification program began in 1978. These certifications, currently Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN) or Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRN), demonstrate to patients, peers, and hospital administrators that the certified nurse has attained specialized abilities in caring for a unique patient population. Obtaining the CNRN certification shows that the certified nurses have the basic knowledge needed to competently care for both neurosurgical and neurological patient populations. The purpose of certification in stroke nursing is to promote excellence and professionalism as well as provide assurance to healthcare



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employers and the public that individuals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience in stroke care to perform competently (ABNN, 2014). The American Nursing Association (ANA) acknowledged certification as a means to assure the public that quality patient care is delivered (ANA, 2014). Certification helps demonstrate the Institute of Medicine “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health” recommendations of achieving higher levels of education, as well as fully utilizing education and training in professional practice (IOM, 2015).

### **Methods**

Literature search of the CINAHL, MEDLINE, and PUBMED databases conducted using the keywords *nursing*, *certification*, *competency*, and *credential*. A search period from 2000–2015 was used and language was limited to English.



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**Approval date:** March 28, 2015

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