



Spine Certificate Program

Participant Handbook

American Association of Neuroscience Nurses and
American Board of Neuroscience Nursing

July 2025

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The *Certificate Program for the Spine Healthcare Professional* is an assessment-based certificate program that uses instructional design principles to deliver an online self-paced educational course followed by a post-assessment. This course will equip participants with the tools to safely care for patients with spinal disease or injury, while providing quality care demanded by healthcare organizations, regulatory agencies, and patients. Participants will earn CE contact hours and an American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) certificate of added qualification that indicates attainment of knowledge upon successful completion of the course.

The primary purpose of this certificate program is to provide foundational knowledge and evidence-based care for patients who have disease or injury of the spine, and require medical and/or surgical treatment.

The program consists of eight (8) online modules, presented sequentially with a post-test at the end of the program. A detailed course outline is available at the end of the handbook. Customers who purchase and complete the 8-module program will earn the certificate as a ***Spine Healthcare Professional***.

- **Module I** – Introduction to Spine
- **Module II** – Spine Disorders
- **Module III** – Diagnosis and Assessment
- **Module IV** – Management and Treatment
- **Module V** – Pain Management
- **Module VI** – Education and Self-Management
- **Module VII** – Special Populations
- **Module VIII** – Quality Measures for Spine Programs

Participants will have access to the modules, course, and post-assessment for **six (6) months** from the time of purchase. There is no time limit to complete a module. Participants may navigate forward and backwards through the courses to review any content. Handouts are available for download once purchased. It is advisable to use these slides to enhance your learning. Please note the handouts follow the main points of the modules, but they are not an exact replica of the course due to the interactive nature of the modules.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/HISTORY

In 2022, the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) and the American Board of Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN) identified the need for an educational course and assessment specific to nurses working with spine patients. The 2 organizations approved the collaboration on the development of the Certificate Program for the Spine Healthcare Professional. AANN is solely responsible for the development of educational content. ABNN is solely responsible for the development of the post-assessments and the certificate of added qualification.

The Editor and Mentee Editor were identified as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop the content outline of the program using their expertise and knowledge in the field as a basis for development. Additional SMEs were then selected as Contributors to re-validate that the content for the program was relevant, comprehensive, and inclusive for professionals working in the Spine healthcare environment. AANN Contributors developed the modules based on the content outline using current references to ensure that program covers all fundamental spine care concepts.

Knowledge Checks and the Post-Assessment were developed by ABNN item writers who were selected based on their expertise in writing items for the Certified Neuroscience Registered Nurse (CNRN) and Stroke Certified Registered Nurse (SCRN) examinations. All item writers were trained on evaluation principles as well as writing sound items. Once items

were developed, they were reviewed to ensure content accuracy, proper citation for each item, and appropriate number of items based on the length of each module. Items were also evaluated for terminology, phrases, idioms, and language that may be sexist or racist, or may offend or discriminate against any legally protected subgroup in the candidate population.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are no eligibility requirements to participate in the program, however, the target audience for this course is nurses who have an interest and understanding of care of patients with spinal disease or injury. It provides a comprehensive curriculum and builds on a foundation of spine knowledge, with the learner earning a certificate of added qualification upon successful completion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this activity, the learner will be able to:

- Differentiate between normal and pathologic spinal anatomy.
- Compare and contrast common spinal disorders.
- Assess diagnostic testing for the individual presenting with spinal injury or disease.
- Describe the medical and surgical options available for the individual with spinal injury or disease.
- Summarize treatment options for acute, subacute, and chronic pain in the context of patients with spinal injury or disease.
- Formulate an education plan across the continuum of care for individuals and families undergoing treatment of spinal injury or disease.
- Describe key differences in the assessment, diagnosis, and management of spinal injury or disease in special patient populations.
- Understand the components to develop a Comprehensive Spine Center.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- Self-paced online program with downloadable PDF files of presentations
- Access to the course and post-assessment throughout a 6-month window
- Knowledge checks and interactions throughout each module to assess whether learning objectives have been met
- Final post-assessment when modules have been completed
- Final evaluation of the program upon completion

KNOWLEDGE CHECKS/POST-ASSESSMENTS

Each module contains interactions or knowledge checks to assess if the learning objectives for the course have been met. There will be a final post-assessment once all modules have been completed. The post-assessment questions are multiple-choice, single answer. Learners must pass the post-assessment with an average score of >80%. If the learner does not pass, they can access the modules again, going back to review materials and then test again. Participants will have three (3) chances to successfully pass the post-assessment. The post-assessment for those taking the program will be **75 items** in length and only include content related to those modules.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this activity, the participant will demonstrate knowledge of spine care and management by passing the post-assessments with a score of >80%. To obtain CE contact hours and the certificate of added qualification, course participants must:

- Complete all of the course modules
- Successfully complete the post-assessment with a score of 80% or higher
- Submit the course evaluation

It is important to adhere to all aspects of the AANN Educational Integrity statement as well.

CERTIFICATE OF ADDED QUALIFICATION and CE

Participants who complete the course and pass all assessments will have earned a **certificate of added qualification** as a **Spine Healthcare Professional**. The recipients of this credential may represent themselves as a “certificate holder as a Spine Healthcare Professional.”

Participants will also receive **11 CE contact hours and 1 pharmacology hour**, and a certificate of completion from AANN upon completion of the program.*

**The American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) is accredited with distinction as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation in Nursing Continuing Professional Development. The American Association of Neuroscience Nurses is accredited as a provider of continuing education by the California Board of Registered Nursing (CEP:13331)*

RENEWAL

The Certificate for the Spine Healthcare Professional must be renewed every **three (3) years** to ensure that your spine knowledge stays current and you are continuing to progress as an experienced spine healthcare professional. To renew the certificate, the candidate must complete **at least 25 continuing education hours** related to spine during the 3-year cycle. The renewal must be successfully completed by December 31st of your third (3rd) year.

AANN and ABNN will provide reminder information in the middle of the year that the candidate is due to recertify; however, it is ultimately the responsibility of the candidate to complete the renewal process. The renewal course will not be available until June of your third (3rd) year.

FEES

Individual

Member Price	Non-member Price
\$300.00	\$450.00

Facility/Group Purchases – Institutions are eligible for a discount when you purchase 10 or more subscriptions to the Spine Certificate Program. Purchases of 10 or more will get 10% off. All group purchasing prices are based off the member rate of \$300.00.

Number of Subscriptions	% discount	Price per participant
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10+	10% off	\$270.00
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CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICY

Purchase of the Certificate Program for Spine Healthcare Professional is intended for single person use by the person who purchased the course. Once the review course is purchased, no refunds will be issued.

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CONTACT

If there are any questions about the Certificate Program or the information provided in this handbook, please contact AANN at info@aann.org.

SPINE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OUTLINE

MODULE I – INTRODUCTION TO SPINE (11 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Anatomy
 - a. Vertebral Column
 - b. Spinal Cord
- B. Cerebrospinal Fluid and Ventricular System
- C. Spinal Nerves
- D. Dermatomes and Myotomes

MODULE II – SPINE DISORDERS (10 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Introduction to Spine Disorders
 - a. Epidemiology
 - b. Risk Factors
- B. Common Spinal Disorders
 - a. Degenerative disc disease
 - b. Herniated nucleus pulposus
 - c. Spondylolisthesis
 - d. Spinal stenosis
- C. Spine and Spinal Cord Injuries
- D. Spinal Oncologic Disease
 - a. Extradural
 - b. Extradural-Intramedullary
 - c. Intramedullary
 - d. Hematologic disease
- E. Spinal Infection
 - a. Abscess
 - b. Osteomyelitis
 - c. Discitis
- F. Autoimmune/Inflammatory Spine Disorders
 - a. Rheumatoid arthritis
 - b. Ankylosing spondylitis
 - c. Transverse myelitis
- G. Vascular Spine Disorders
 - a. Spinal hematoma
 - b. Spinal ischemic stroke
 - c. Spinal arteriovenous malformation (AVM)
 - d. Spine cavernous angioma

MODULE III – DIAGNOSIS AND ASSESSMENT (10 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Diagnosis
 - 1. Spinal imaging
 - 2. Diagnostic testing
 - 3. Laboratory testing

- B. Assessment
 - 1. RN assessment
 - 2. APN assessment

MODULE IV – MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT (10 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Medical Management
 - 1. Evidence-based guidelines
 - 2. Conservative management
- B. Surgical Management
 - a. Discectomy
 - b. Laminectomy
 - c. Spinal fusion
 - d. Kyphoplasty and Vertebroplasty

MODULE V – PAIN MANAGEMENT (11 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Introduction to Spine Pain
 - a. Epidemiology
 - b. Pain Theories
 - c. Pain Types
- B. Pain Assessments
- C. Pain Treatment Strategies
- D. Interventional Care
- E. Patient Education
- F. Special Populations
 - a. Mental Health
 - b. Pregnancy
 - c. Opioid Use Disorder

MODULE VI - EDUCATION AND SELF-MANAGEMENT (7 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Preoperative Considerations
 - a. Opioid weaning
 - b. Enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS)
- B. Postoperative Considerations
 - a. Loss of independence
 - b. Employment and Disability
- C. Family Dynamics
 - a. Support services
 - b. Provider resources
- D. General Patient and Family Education
 - a. Safety at home
 - b. Pain diaries/logs
 - c. Medication adherence
 - d. Emergency contacts

MODULE VII – SPECIAL POPULATIONS (10 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Pediatrics
 - A. Spinal Conditions
 - a. Scoliosis
 - b. Arnold Chiari Malformation
 - c. Spina Bifida
 - d. Tethered Cord
 - B. Diagnosis and Assessment
 - C. Treatment
- B. Women
 - 1. Pregnancy
 - a. Pregnancy and back pain
 - b. Priorities of back pain management
 - 2. Vertebral Fractures
 - a. Statistics
 - b. Prevention and management
 - 3. Hormonal Therapy
 - a. Estrogen
 - b. Progesterone
 - c. Warnings
 - d. Alternatives and other considerations
- C. Elderly
 - 1. Pain Management in the Elderly
 - 2. Screening Tools
 - 3. Medication Management

MODULE VIII – QUALITY MEASURES FOR SPINE PROGRAMS (6 POST-ASSESSMENT ITEMS)

- A. Centers of Excellence
- B. Spine Surgery Program Certification
 - a. The Joint Commission
 - b. Det Norske Veritas
 - c. Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Care
- C. National Distinction Programs
 - a. Aetna: Spine surgery physician designation
 - b. Blue Cross Blue Shield: Blue Distinction Centers
 - c. Healthgrades: America's Best Hospital Award
- D. Developing a Comprehensive Spine Team
- E. Importance of an Interdisciplinary Team
- F. Patient Education and Care Coordination
 - a. Program elements
 - b. Education classes
 - c. Patient outcomes
- G. Patient Testing
- H. Enhanced Recovery After Surgery Protocols (ERAS)
- I. Inpatient Care

- a. Nursing management
 - b. Special nursing considerations in spinal fusion
 - c. Management of postoperative complications
- J. Discharge Planning and follow-up care

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- A. AANN – American Association of Neuroscience Nurses www.aann.org
- B. NAON – National Association of Orthopedic Nurses www.orthonurse.org
- C. Pain
 - a. American Society for Pain Management Nursing www.aspmn.org
 - b. International Nurses Society on Addiction www.intsa.org
- D. Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) www.aorn.org
- E. SCI
 - a. American Association of Spinal Cord Injury Nurses (AASCIN) www.aascin.org
 - b. Miami Project to Cure Paralysis www.themiamiproject.org
 - c. Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation www.christopherreeve.org
- F. American Spine Registry www.americanspineregistry.org
- G. Association of Rehabilitation Nurses www.rehabnurse.org
- H. Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine <https://pva.org/research-resources/consortium-for-scm/>
- I. Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals, Inc. <https://www.academyscipro.org/>
- J. Advanced Certification in Spine Surgery. <https://www.jointcommission.org/what-we-offer/certification/certifications-by-setting/hospital-certifications/orthopedic-certification/advanced-orthopedic/advanced-certification-in-spine-surgery/>