

## 10 ANS DU PROGRAMME DE CERTIFICATION EN SOINS PÉRIOPÉRATOIRES

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Les infirmières et infirmiers périopératoires commémorent cette année le dixième anniversaire du programme de certification de l'Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Canada, un organisme méritant nos sincères félicitations pour avoir franchi cette étape importante. Nous célébrons cet accomplissement grâce à un groupe d'infirmières et infirmiers périopératoires engagés qui a dédié énormément de temps à travailler avec l'AIIC afin de recevoir cette désignation spéciale. Le premier examen de certification offert en 1995 est le fruit de leur labeur (496 infirmières et infirmiers ont reçu cette certification suite à cet examen).

Maintenant, en 2005, 1660 infirmières et infirmiers sont certifiés en soins périopératoires au Canada (CSP(C)).

## 10 YEARS OF PERIOPERATIVE NURSING CERTIFICATION

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Operating Room nurses are commemorating 10 years of certification with the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Certification Program and are to be sincerely congratulated in achieving this very important milestone. Our ability to celebrate this decade of accomplishment is the result of a very dedicated group of perioperative nurses who volunteered a great deal of time to working with the CNA in order to obtain a specialty designation. They then worked on the development of the first perioperative certification exam that was offered in 1995 (496 nurses obtained the first Perioperative certification credential after this exam).

Currently, in 2005, there are 1660 Canadian nurses who proudly claim the Certified in Perioperative Nursing Canada (CPN(C)) or Certifié(e) en soins périopératoires Canada (CSP(C)) credential.

### WHAT IS NURSING CERTIFICATION?

Specialty certification is a voluntary program developed by the CNA in conjunction with other related national associations. The program permits RNs, with pre-established hours of nursing experience in the specialty field, to receive a professional specialty designation through the completion of a certification exam.

The CNA Certification Program was initiated by a membership request in June 1980 through a biennial resolution that directed CNA to study the feasibility of developing examinations for certification in major nursing specialties. Through the efforts and support of national nursing groups, the first certification exam was offered to neuroscience nurses in 1991.

A principal requirement for the establishment of certification examination for a specialty is that the national association, along with other representatives within the field, demonstrates that the knowledge and skills required of the RN comprise a distinct body of knowledge that is unique to the specialty. More explicitly, the stated goals of the certification program are to enable the assessment of specialized knowledge and skills, to enable the identification of nurses in a distinct specialty as 'certified / not certified', and to ensure that the assessment is based on competencies that are different than the entry-level 'RN' knowledge base and different than that of other nursing specialties.

Due to the direct involvement of the specialty association in the creation of the certification examination each certification exam is quite distinct (although the same process is used for the development of each exam). Examination committees are formed, from within each of the specialties, and the framework, blueprint, and multiple choice items developed for each examination reflects only content that is unique to that particular specialty. All development and

maintenance activities for each CNA nursing specialty certification exam are performed in the same manner.

CNA believes this represents the best possible approach to certification. It is not necessary to test knowledge already possessed by the RN because that content is common to all, or most, of the specialties.

For the perioperative specialty, ORNAC works closely with the CNA, and the CNA owned Assessment Strategies Inc. (ASI), toward the development of the perioperative competencies and the certification exam. Nurse experts in perioperative nursing from across Canada provide their knowledge and expertise to ensure the exam fairly validates the knowledge of a perioperative nurse who meets the established criteria.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RN LICENSE AND CERTIFICATION?

The RN license is the minimum requirement for professional nurses and signifies entry-level knowledge and ability to provide care for clients. It does not recognize, or indicate, acquired and increased knowledge over the passage of time.

Nursing specialty certification, on the other hand, recognizes a voluntary process during which a nurse has developed specialty knowledge beyond the entry level and chooses to undergo a rigorous process in order to confirm, through an exam, her/his knowledge of the specialty. Certification is based on existing professional practice and, therefore, validates that a nurse's knowledge is current.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Certification in perioperative nursing makes a difference to the clients who entrust a nurse with their care, to employers who staff their facilities with skilled and experienced perioperative nurses, and to the nurse who has acquired the CPN(C). It confirms that the perioperative certified nurse has the experience to deliver complex specialized care to clients. The confidence held by clients in their qualified caregiver is strengthened when they are aware of a nurse's credentials and can bring additional comfort at a time when they are feeling

vulnerable and unsure. Public awareness is growing and is increasingly looking for confirmation of the caregiver's credentials.<sup>1</sup>

CNA believes employers, recognizing the benefits of certification in perioperative nursing, are confident that recruiting and retaining these highly qualified nurses provides them, and their clients, with the ability to meet the new demands in client care. Many employers who support this valuable program are providing employees with financial help and additional study tools to take the certification exam.

Nurses with certification report that certification has enabled them to experience personal growth and a greater satisfaction in their nursing practice.<sup>2</sup>

### HOW IS THE EXAM DEVELOPED?

Each exam is developed by an exam committee that consists of volunteer certified nurses in the specialty who have been selected, by CNA, from various regions across Canada and each of the four nursing domains (clinical practice, education, research and administration). The exam committee works with experienced ASI consultant psychologists and psychometrists who have expertise in statistical/quantitative methods. The committee is guided by detailed testing principles to ensure the program remains valid, reliable and fair. The nurses provide the content and the consultants lead them through the process. The committee membership always includes at least one bilingual nurse. All exams and related materials are prepared in both English and French.

The exam committee also provides the content for the specialty *Nursing Certification Exam Prep Guide*, which is designed to help nurses prepare either on their own or in study groups. The guide includes the exam blueprint, the competencies developed for the specialty, the bibliography used to create the exam, and sample test questions and key answers along with their rationale.

The competencies which are used for the development of the exam and the bibliography are also available on the CNA website by

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## NURSING CERTIFICATION (cont.)

finding the specialty in the certification section found at [www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca).

### HOW TO BECOME CERTIFIED IN PERIOPERATIVE NURSING?

Nurses must meet specific eligibility criteria to write the 4-hour, multiple choice, exam that takes place once a year, on the same day, in over 50 locations across Canada.

#### Perioperative nursing candidates must:

- be RNs, currently licensed in Canada;
- have 3900 hours of nursing practice in perioperative nursing acquired over the past five years or if the candidate has a nursing degree, or a post basic nursing certificate or diploma program of more than 300 hours in the chosen specialty, then she/he will require 1950 hours of nursing practice in perioperative nursing acquired over the past three years; and
- provide endorsement, from a supervisor or manager, confirming experience in the specialty area.

Application Guides are available in the certification section at [www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca).

A candidate who has successfully passed the perioperative nursing certification exam receives a certificate, a gold Certification pin and the CPN(C) or CSP(C) credential. This credential is valid for five years from the date of the exam.



### WHAT IS CERTIFICATION RENEWAL?

Once nurses have acquired their certification credential it is vital that they continue to validate their nursing practice and current knowledge in the specialty. Certification is an ongoing process. To maintain the credential, a nurse renews the certification credential every five years by demonstrating 3900 hours of clinical practice in perioperative nursing, and 100 hours of continuous learning activities related to perioperative nursing, or by choosing to write the current perioperative nursing certification exam meeting the current criteria

Nurses who value this highly respected credential will take every opportunity to remain current with changes in their selected field of nursing practice. They will attend conferences, workshops and in-services. In addition they might take courses and give lectures. It is their responsibility to keep track of their certification expiry date and to inform the CNA Certification Program of any address changes. CNA will provide a reminder of the renewal date about six- months before a credential is due to expire.

### WHAT ARE CONTINUOUS LEARNING (CL) ACTIVITIES?

With the implementation of continued competence and quality assurance programs in some provinces and territories, registered nurses need to maintain, and continuously enhance, their competencies through continuous learning in order to base their practice on knowledge and skills relevant to the most current client health needs.

- Each CL activity must relate to the nursing specialty and be a minimum of 30 minutes in length;
- An identical CL activity may be reported only once during the five-year certification term (e.g., Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS)). If the activity is taken at a higher level, one can then count both (e.g., BCLS and then Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS));
- Each CL activity claimed must be earned within the candidate's five-year certification term. Candidates can forecast their CL hours up to the last day of the certification term, indicate that they will be confirming the activity prior to that date, and then show proof to the Certification program prior to the end of the certification period.
- One clock hour equals one CL hour;
- Pre-authorization from CNA is not required for CL activities to be recognized; and
- CL activities can be earned outside Canada. International CL activities are not only accepted, they are encouraged.

The CNA Certification Program allows a great deal of flexibility with regard to the type of continuous learning activities that one may undertake for credit. CNA will, however, limit the number of hours one can claim for some CL

activities. Only activities that are not part of a paid position's job description are eligible.

The following are just a few examples of the types of continuous learning activities a certified nurse may wish to engage in to meet the learning needs: (additional types can be found in the Recertification Application Guide at [www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca)):<sup>3</sup>

#### Academic Courses

- The course content must be related to the area of certification.
- Academic credits or courses that are outside of the nursing specialty cannot be counted. (e.g., English, literature, history, music, general computer courses).

#### CL hours allotted:

- In general, a college or university semester course (e.g., from September to December) is equal to 36 CL hours.
- If one does not know how many credits are allowed for a course, calculate one CL hour for every clock hour spent attending the course (e.g., 3 hours/week x 12 weeks = 36 CL hours).

#### Conferences, teleconferences, videoconferences, seminars, workshops

- The general guidelines outlined under Academic Courses are followed.
- Total hours attended are calculated. (e.g., not necessary to breakdown every individual conference session attended).

#### Employer In-services

- If the in-service is offered regularly (e.g., nursing grand rounds once a month), a running list of the sessions attended, with all the pertinent information, needs to be kept. A nursing supervisor or nurse educator needs to sign the list.

#### Leading a study group to prepare for the certification exam

- The maximum number of hours one can claim for this activity is 20 hours.
- One can count organizing and leading a study group to help other RNs prepare for the CNA certification exam, as long as the study group is in one's certification area.

- One clock hour equals one CL hour when calculating leadership of a study group. The candidate must show proof of an agenda, outline or similar documentation to support the activity.

#### Professional committee membership/participation

- Maximum number of hours one can claim for this activity is 25 hours
- The committee must be applicable to one's area of certification. It should not be part of the regular responsibilities of one's job description. The candidate must show proof of an agenda, meeting minutes, etc.

#### Presenter/lecturer credits

- These are credits for presentations made to other health professionals on topics related to one's area of certification.
- Preparation time can also be counted. To calculate preparation time, double the presentation time (e.g., 1 hour presentation + 2 hours preparation = 3 CL hours).

#### Preceptorship

- Maximum number of hours one can claim for this activity is 40 hours.
- The preceptorship must be in one's specialty area.
- The candidate should obtain documentation from the school of nursing or the manager involved in mandating the candidate's responsibilities in monitoring a student or nursing colleague.

#### Articles, book chapters, research projects

- One can include publication of materials relevant to one's area of certification.  
*CL hours allotted:*
- For authorship or co-authorship of a book, allot 25 CL hours.
- For a book chapter, manuscript article or paper, allot 15 CL hours.

#### Research projects

- One may count a research project if it has been completed during the five-year certification term.
- One clock hour equals one CL hour when calculating one's participation in research

**Participating in CNA certification exam development**

- CNA will provide proof of participation.

To summarize, nurses have the potential to validate their ongoing knowledge in their specialty by participating in the CNA Certification program. It is a voluntary process that provides them with a credential to confirm the currency of their knowledge. Further information about future exams and application deadlines can be found on the CNA website at [www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca) or by calling 1-800-361-8404.

*ORNAC would like to thank the many perioperative nurses across Canada whose labour brought about the first Perioperative Certification Exam. We also congratulate the nurses who continue to strive for Perioperative excellence by achieving, and maintaining, their certification.*

**REFERENCES**

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*Endnote: Much of this material has been taken from the Canadian Nurses Association website and can be found at [www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca). \**

# UPCOMING EVENTS

For details visit [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca)

**PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL CONFERENCES**

British Columbia	Harrison Hot Springs	April 19-22, 2006
Alberta	Red Deer	October 25-28, 2006
Saskatchewan	Regina	September 21-24, 2006
Manitoba	Winnipeg	June 15-17, 2006
Ontario	Ottawa	April 23-26, 2006
Quebec	Laval	November 7-9, 2006
New Brunswick	Miramichi	April 21-22, 2006
Atlantic Conference	Halifax	October 4-7, 2006
Newfoundland & Labrador	Grand Falls - Windsor	September 14-16, 2006

**ORNAC CONFERENCES**

[www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca)

20th National	Victoria, BC	April 23-27, 2007
21st National	St. John's, NL	June 7-12, 2009

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

ACORN ( <a href="http://www.acorn.org.au">www.acorn.org.au</a> )	Canberra, Australia	May 24-26, 2006
AORN ( <a href="http://www.aorn.org">www.aorn.org</a> )	Washington, DC	March 19-23, 2006
EORNA ( <a href="http://www.eornac.com">www.eornac.com</a> )	Dublin, Ireland	May 25-28, 2006
NATN ( <a href="http://www.natn.org">www.natn.org</a> )	Harrogate, UK	October 9-13, 2006

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