



## **AORN Position Statement on Perioperative Nursing Certification**

### **POSITION STATEMENT**

AORN believes that

- the practice of perioperative nursing requires specialized knowledge and skills that contributes to optimal patient outcomes.
- obtaining perioperative nursing specialty certification from accredited credential providers is one important step to assuring patients, colleagues, and the public at large that they are receiving the highest quality perioperative nursing care.
- employers should support RNs in their certification and recertification activities, encourage the display of the certified RN's credentials, and market the professional accomplishments of certified RNs to the public.

### **RATIONALE**

Specialty nursing certification is an objective measure that validates a registered nurse (RN) possesses the knowledge needed to provide specialized nursing care.<sup>1</sup> Certification provides formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skill, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of identified standards.<sup>1</sup>

As detailed in the Institute of Medicine report on the future of nursing, “The ultimate goal of licensure, accreditation, certification, and education is to promote patient safety and public protection.”<sup>2(p320)</sup>

“Certification is time-limited, and maintenance of certification requires ongoing acquisition of both knowledge and experience in practice”<sup>2(p191)</sup> to provide structure and guidance for the RN's professional development processes. Certification requirements often exceed workplace and licensure requirements of the state boards of nursing. Ongoing professional development provides a level of assurance that the RN is current in the knowledge required for safe, competent care that meets evidence-based standards of practice.

A number of studies substantiate the positive effects of certification on nursing and patient outcomes. As early as 2003, the case was clearly made for the value of certification in nursing.<sup>3</sup> A study by Fitzpatrick et al affirmed that certified RNs report higher levels of empowerment than do non-certified RNs.<sup>4</sup> A 2012 study stated that RN leaders should be “. . . cognizant of the value of certification and must develop and implement programs to support certification in the workplace.”<sup>5</sup> A study by McHugh et al in 2013 associated nursing characteristics such as higher levels of education and certification with significantly lower rates of patient mortality and failure to rescue.<sup>6</sup> Research published in 2014 in the *AORN Journal* found that certified RNs working in the perioperative environment had a positive effect on patient outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Because certification in perioperative nursing verifies what an accomplished perioperative nurse should know and do in the context of his or her daily work, all perioperative nurses are encouraged to pursue specialty certification as a means to

demonstrate their mastery of nationally recognized nursing standards and evidence-based practices. In addition, perioperative RNs who complete their certification are excellent resources to mentor future candidates in appropriate practices through the knowledge and experiences they have gained in their specialty. Creating this culture of learning and peer-to-peer support drives workplace satisfaction, confidence, and, ultimately, safer patient care.

## References

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5. Samedy K, Quinn Griffin MT, Leask Capitulo K, Fitzpatrick JJ. Perceptions of structural empowerment: differences between nationally certified perinatal nurses and perinatal nurses who are not nationally certified. *J Contin Educ Nurs*. 2012;43(10):463-466.
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## Additional Resources

AORN Position Statement on Entry into Practice

## Publication History

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