



HPNA Position Statement **Value of Hospice and Palliative Nursing Certification**

Background

Certification 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 patient care.¹ Through the completion of specialized education, experience in a specialty nursing practice, and the successful completion of a qualifying exam or portfolio, nurses and other qualified members of the nursing team, can achieve specialty certification credentials. Maintenance of certification is accomplished through a variety of mechanisms including reexamination, continuing education, self-assessment, and ongoing clinical practice. Hospice and palliative nursing certification is a process through which the National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses (NBCHPN®) validates an individual's qualifications and knowledge in the specialized area of hospice and palliative care.

The first nursing certification program occurred in 1945 with the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists. In 2008, it is estimated that there are more than 500,000 certified U.S. registered and advance practice nurses, by more than 25 certifying organizations. It is estimated that 16% of nurses are certified in at least one specialty.²

Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive link between certified nurses and performance outcomes for patients. A survey of 350,000 certified nurses was conducted by the Nursing Credentialing Research Coalition in 2000 and was the first known study of the relationship between certified nurses and patient care. This study identified numerous positive outcomes associated with certified nurses including:

- Fewer adverse events in patient care;
- Higher patient satisfaction ratings;
- More effective communication and collaboration with other providers;
- Fewer disciplinary events;
- Fewer work-related injuries; and
- Increased personal growth and professional satisfaction.³

In other studies, it was identified that certified nurses have a significant impact on patient care and patient safety.⁴ Furthermore, it has been identified that specialty

certification is the most effective way of assuring that a nurse has the knowledge and skills needed to provide safe, high-quality care to the public.⁵ In another value associated with certified nurses, certification can be seen as a powerful marketing tool as certification is identified as a significant way to create an environment of respect and support.⁶

In 2007, a large multi-specialty study of more than 11,400 certified, non-certified nurses, and nurse managers, was conducted by the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS). Hospice and palliative care nurses participated in this study. Results demonstrated highest agreement that specialty nursing certification enhanced feelings of personal accomplishment, validated specialized knowledge, indicated personal growth, and indicated evidence of professional commitment.⁷

According to its mission statement, the National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses (NBCHPN[®]) promotes a certification process that advances quality in the provision of care to patients and families facing life-limiting illnesses.

To this end, NBCHPN[®] has expanded beyond the registered nurse, promoting the delivery of comprehensive palliative care through the certification of qualified hospice and palliative members of the nursing team by:

- Providing a national standard of requisite knowledge required for certification; thereby assisting the consumer, the employer, and members of the health profession in the recognition of the certified hospice and palliative caregiver.
- Encouraging continued personal and professional growth in the practice of hospice and palliative nursing care. Establishing and measuring the level of knowledge required for certification in hospice and palliative care.
- Formally recognizing those individuals who meet the certification eligibility requirements, and are successful in earning the following NBCHPN[®] credential:
 - Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse – CHPN[®]
 - Certified Hospice and Palliative Nursing Assistant – CHPNA[®]
 - Certified Hospice and Palliative Licensed Practical or Licensed Vocational Nurse – CHPLN[®]
 - Advance Practice Registered Nurses – ACHPN[®] (initially the credential earned was APRN, BC-PCM when this certification was initiated through a partnership with ANCC – The American Nurses Credentialing Center. The original credential has been retired and replaced with ACHPN[®])
 - Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Administrator - CHPCA

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) is the only accrediting organization specifically for nursing certification programs. ABNS was incorporated in 1991 to create uniformity in nursing certification and to increase public awareness of the value of certification. ABNS serves as an advocate for consumer protection by establishing and maintaining standards for professional specialty nursing certification. The Certification Examinations for hospice and

palliative registered nurses (CHPN[®]) and advance practice nurses (ACHPN[®]) have been accredited by ABNS. Accreditation status is valid for five years, and then must be renewed.¹

Position Statement

This is the position of the HPNA Board of Directors:

- Support the certification of nurses and other qualified members of the nursing team in hospice and palliative care.
- Encourages employers to actively support those individuals pursuing certification.

Definition of Terms

Certification: The formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal patient care.¹

References

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This position statement reflects the bioethics standards or best available clinical evidence at the time of writing or revisions.

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