

Certification Makes a Difference

Certification in oncology nursing makes a difference—to patients whose care is provided by oncology certified nurses, to employers who must staff their facilities with qualified and experienced nurses, and to the individual nurse who attains certification.

What is Nursing Certification?



Certification is the formal recognition of specialized knowledge, skills and experience in nursing. It is demonstrated by achieving standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote

health outcomes. Certification assures the public a nurse has completed all eligibility criteria to earn a specific credential. It also promotes the development of specialty nursing by establishing minimum competency standards and recognizing those who have met the standards.

Certification—It's More than an RN License

An RN license signifies a nurse has entry-level knowledge to provide care for patients, and is the minimum requirement for professional nurses. An RN license doesn't indicate whether a nurse has obtained knowledge beyond the minimum level, but certification does.

Certification is a voluntary process. It signifies a nurse has both experience and specialty knowledge beyond the entry level. In oncology nursing, the certification examinations are based on current professional practice, and validate a certified nurse's knowledge of cancer care.



Patients Value Certification

Patients and families expect knowledgeable caregivers at the bedside and certification offers them reassurance of their nurses' competence.¹ Knowledgeable nurses are better equipped to recognize problems quickly and take action. In one survey related to cancer care, certified nurses scored higher than noncertified nurses on knowledge of pain and nausea, two symptoms that are often of most concern to patients with cancer.²

Certification is an important indicator to patients that nurses are qualified and experienced.¹

In short, certification can help patients feel confident about their caregivers. To patients with cancer and their families, certification means the nurse is a qualified caregiver.

Nurses Grow Through Certification

Certification can offer personal and professional rewards to individual nurses. Consider these survey results: 97% of nurses said certification provides personal satisfaction; 88% agreed it enhances personal confidence in clinical abilities; and 80% said it validates specialized knowledge, enhances professional credibility, and indicates a level of clinical competence.³

On average, specialty-certified nurses earn over \$7 more per hour than nurses who aren't certified.⁶

Professional rewards for certification can vary, too. Certification is often required for advancement to higher levels on the career ladder, or it may open doors to new professional opportunities. In some instances, certified nurses receive financial incentives, such as salary differentials or bonuses.

Employers Benefit from Certification

Certification in oncology nursing can help employers who are faced with several challenges, including:

- a shortage of experienced nurses
- an aging population that is at greater risk for developing cancer
- a desire to attain distinction in a healthcare system that is under increasing public scrutiny.

Supporting certification can help employers recruit and retain highly qualified nurses by contributing to job satisfaction. Given the high costs related to staff turnover, supporting certification can be a smart investment.

By 2030, 1 in 5 people will be 55 or older—the group at greatest risk for developing cancer.⁵

An aging population is creating demands for nurses who are knowledgeable about cancer care. Approximately 77% of all cancers are diagnosed in people age 55 or older.⁴ By the year 2030, more than 1 in 5 U.S. residents are expected to be 55 or older.⁴

Certified nurses can help employers distinguish themselves in the healthcare marketplace. Certification of nursing staff can factor into accreditation granted by agencies such as the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, or distinction by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Magnet Recognition Program™. Certification is also recommended by the Association for Community Cancer Centers Standards for Cancer Programs, and the American College of Radiation Oncology Standards for Radiation Oncology.



Options in Oncology Nursing Certification

In the specialty of oncology nursing, several certifications are available, including:

- OCN® (Oncology Certified Nurse) — basic level certification focusing on adult care
- CPHON® (Certified Pediatric Hematology Oncology Nurse) — basic level certification in pediatric hematology/oncology nursing
- AOCNP® (Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner) — role specific certification for nurse practitioners in adult oncology
- AOCNS® (Advanced Oncology Certified Clinical Nurse Specialist) — role specific certification for clinical nurse specialists in adult oncology
- CBCN® (Certified Breast Care Nurse) — comprehensive certification for nurses who practice in breast care nursing
- AOCN® (Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse) — advanced certification in adult oncology (available for renewal only)
- CPON® — basic level certification in pediatric oncology nursing (available for renewal only).

These credentials ensure that certified nurses are prepared to deliver knowledgeable, specialized care along the entire continuum of cancer care.



Becoming Certified

Certified nurses must meet specific eligibility criteria for nursing experience and specialty practice, and pass a rigorous

multiple-choice examination. Certifications granted by ONCC are valid for four years and may be renewed by a combination of specialty practice hours, professional development activities or retesting.

More information about certification can be found at www.oncc.org.

About ONCC

The mission of ONCC is to promote excellence in patient care and professional practice by validating specialized knowledge in oncology nursing and related specialties. All ONCC certifications are nationally accredited.

References

¹American Nurses Credentialing Center. Why Certify? An overview of ANCC Nursing Certification. ANCC.

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⁴Cancer Facts & Figures 2009. American Cancer Society. Retrieved October 30, 2009 from <http://www.cancer.org/downloads/STT/500809web.pdf>.

⁵Projections of the Population by Age and Sex for the United States: 2010-2050. US Census Bureau. Retrieved October 30, 2009 from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/summarytables.html>

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