



## **Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association Position Statement**

### **Transport Nurse Certification**

#### *Background*

Certification is the process by which a nongovernmental agency or association validates, based on predetermined standards, an individual registered nurse's (RN) qualifications and knowledge for practice in a defined functional or clinical area of nursing. Because of the rapid advances in medical research and technology and subsequent changes in the sophistication of nursing practice, it has become increasingly apparent that specialty nursing practice is a necessity. With the increase in specialization, it is also apparent that state licensure alone is not sufficient to ensure safe nursing practice in all specialty areas. Certification programs fill the gap by identifying and measuring the knowledge base required for specialty practice.

Specialty certification is also a means of promoting quality patient care. By ensuring that only those individuals who maintain the predetermined standards required for specialty practice are granted certification, certification enables the consumer, the government, third-party payors, and other health care professionals to identify those who have attained a qualifying level of knowledge. This is not to say that those who are not certified are not competent, it only means that those who are certified have had their knowledge validated and are equipped to provide the nursing care required for practice in a specialty.

Specialty certification is positively associated with patient safety and positive patient outcomes, and almost all hospital nurse managers, preferring to employ certified nurses, feel that certification is valuable to the staff, and report better workplace performance by certified nurses than by their noncertified counterparts. Organizations that support certification have reduced employee turnover rates and training costs, as well as increased savings in personnel management secondary to higher staff job satisfaction rates. Certification is highly encouraged as part of the American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program for hospitals.

Critical care transport nursing is one such specialty area of nursing practice, as transport nurses care for a particularly acute and complex patient population in a uniquely demanding environment. Transport nurses need a mechanism by which competence in the knowledge base essential for safe, high-quality critical care transport nursing practice can be identified by

employers, patients, regulatory agencies, third-party payors, and the public at large. In July 1991, the Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association (ASTNA) entered into a joint certification venture with the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN), leading to development of the first transport-specific specialty nursing certification, the Certified Flight Registered Nurse (CFRN). In 2006, in recognition of the increasing role of registered nurses in critical care ground transport programs, the BCEN and ASTNA collaborated on the development of the Certified Transport Registered Nurse (CTRN) credentialing examination.

In 2017, the BCEN commissioned the largest study to date specifically focused on the value of specialty nursing certification. The study was rigorous and used regression analysis to examine outcomes. Based on these data, five compelling reasons for obtaining and maintaining specialty nursing certification were identified:

- *Nursing self-efficacy*: The concept of self-efficacy is defined as the ability to exert control over one's own behavior and motivation.
- *Accuracy, technical performance and ethics*: Certified nurses perform patient care at a high degree of accuracy, remain current on new technical developments, and exhibit ethical behavior.
- *Career success and satisfaction*: The study data confirm that a correlation exists between higher annual pay, job advancement, and career satisfaction.
- *Advance the profession*: Specialty certification advances nursing by valuing, promoting, and advancing education and clinical excellence.
- *Do it for patients*: Certification promotes consumer confidence and contributes to better patient care and outcomes, which contributes to higher patient satisfaction.

#### *ASTNA Position*

- ASTNA believes that specialty certification as a critical care transport nurse is the mechanism by which the attainment of a defined body of critical care transport nursing knowledge is validated.
- ASTNA believes that specialty certification in critical care transport nursing should be a part of individual professional development models and program accreditation standards.
- ASTNA recognizes that specialty certification in critical care transport nursing is not a reasonable expectation for entry-level transport providers, but endorses the requirement for some nursing specialty certification for entry-level critical care transport nurses with progression to a critical care transport-specific credential after a time period suggested by the certification board.

- ASTNA strongly supports Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS) requirement of certification as a standard to be a critical care transport nurse.

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