



Nursing Certification for better Patient Outcomes:

A Literature Review

Deborah Brown, BSN, RN

Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia

sentara nurse



BACKGROUND

- Certification may reflect multiple nursing skills and qualities:
 - Nursing proficiency and competency
 - Personal and professional satisfaction
 - Dedication to quality patient care
 - Commitment to career development
 - Formal recognition of specialized knowledge
- Professional development and research are two of the Institute of Medicine's recommendations for nursing.
- It is the duty of all nurses to provide the best care possible to their patient population.

However, it is not clear what research has been done to support these perceptions for bedside nurses.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this literature review was to review the **evidence that supports or refutes the benefits of certification of bedside nurses.**

METHODS

- PubMed and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature databases were searched.
- Key search terms were “*nursing certification*” and “*patient outcomes*.”
- Article titles and abstracts were reviewed to initially narrow down the list of articles that met the study purpose.
- The remaining articles were reviewed using a full-text review to identify articles that evaluated the effect of certification on bedside nursing outcomes.



RESULTS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

- Thirteen articles met search criteria.
- Multiple studies demonstrated improved patient outcomes associated with higher levels of nursing certification.
 - Multiple studies indicated that higher certification rates are associated with lower patient fall rates.
 - One study found higher certification rates in perioperative nurses to be associated with lower CLABSI rates in SICU.
 - Certified nurses demonstrate more knowledge of the care of patients with pressure ulcers.
 - A 10% increase in BSN nurses with certification is associated with reduced mortality and failure to rescue.
- Fewer studies examined specialty areas and demonstrated that specialized certification led to improved outcomes related to that specific areas of practice.
 - Certified oncology nurses showed improved patient care quality in the areas of pain and chemotherapy induced nausea/vomiting control when they participated in continuing education hours and membership in ONS over non-certified.
 - CRRN rehabilitation nurses showed a decrease in their patients’ length of stay, a specific patient care outcome in rehabilitation nursing.
 - Perioperative areas with higher rates of CPAN certified nurses showed a lower rate of CAUTI’s when patients were transferred to SICUs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research examining the benefit of bedside nursing certification should **focus on a single type of certification** and the patient outcomes that are common to that specialty’s patient population.
- Studies should be large enough to **provide statistically significant outcomes** with reproducible results.

CONCLUSIONS

- Certification improves overall quality of patient care, particularly in specialty areas.
- Certification allows nurses to stay up-to-date with cutting edge bedside nursing practice.
- Certification is an important opportunity to advance nursing knowledge by sitting for the exam and then by the on-going professional development needed to maintain certification.

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