

AACN Update on the New Comprehensive Care Certification Exam

March 6, 2009

Over the past few weeks, AACN has received many inquiries from members and colleagues about our view of the new Comprehensive Care certification examination and our engagement with the Council for the Advancement of Comprehensive Care (CACC) that formed at Columbia University. AACN has developed the set of talking points below to help answer some frequently asked questions and bring clarity to several important issues.

- Last year, the AACN Board of Directors agreed that AACN should accept the CACC's invitation and re-engage with this group to participate in the discussion and monitor the work underway to develop a new certification exam for some graduates of Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. We believed that this collaboration would foster a greater understanding of each organization's view on certification and provide opportunities to support areas of consensus. AACN appreciates Columbia University's invitation to participate in this work to clarify a new role for those DNP graduates who select a career path in comprehensive care and wish to pursue this additional certification.
- AACN recognizes the DNP as an academic degree that prepares nurses for a variety of advanced specialty nursing roles, including the four legally recognized Advanced Practice Registered Nursing (APRN) roles: Certified Nurse-Midwives, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, Clinical Nurse Specialists, and Certified Nurse Practitioners. A variety of specialty and role certification examinations are currently available for nurses who have graduated from an accredited graduate program and are prepared to practice as an APRN.
- AACN's Board of Directors endorsed the *Consensus Model for APRN Regulation* in July 2008, and we remain committed to the recommendations contained in this document. (See <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Education/pdf/APRNReport.pdf>). A critical element of this consensus is the agreement that all APRNs should be certified through a nationally recognized nursing certifying body and that the exams offered by these certification agencies will be used by state boards to grant APRNs the authority to practice.
- Comprehensive Care is a new specialty area defined by Columbia University and the CACC for DNP graduates seeking roles as Comprehensive Care providers. For more information about this exam and what it tests, see <http://www.abcc.dnpcert.org>. This certification is not appropriate for all graduates of DNP programs; it is an option for DNP graduates who wish to become certified in this specialty.
- The Comprehensive Care exam is not intended to replace the national certification exams that lead to recognition for state licensure as an APRN. As noted on the Web site for the American Board of Comprehensive Care, the organization that oversees the exam, candidates for this exam must hold national certification as an APRN and be a graduate of a DNP program. See <http://www.abcc.dnpcert.org/overview.shtml>.

AACN hopes this statement answers many of the questions we have been receiving about the Comprehensive Care exam. If you have any questions or need clarification on the information above, please contact rrosseter@aacn.nche.edu.