



Certification Explosion: A Hospital's Initiative Ignites With True Collaboration of Unit Management

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BACKGROUND

Certification programs are intended for consumer protection, and growing evidence links certified nursing practice with positive patient outcomes: ^{1,2,3}

- Certification validates advanced knowledge and competence in a specialty
- Certified nurses make decisions with more confidence and demonstrate adherence to evidence-based guidelines
- Certification can lead to increased patient satisfaction scores

As a Magnet® recognized hospital, Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center holds a high standard and promotes specialty certification among nursing.

PROCESS TO BE IMPROVED

- The adult cardiothoracic surgical unit (7 West) at UCLA previously had 24% of RNs certified, which was below the unit goal of 50% by 2014.
- Barriers to certification included scheduling conflicts, lack of review courses and materials, financial expense, test-taking anxiety, and perceived lack of value.

TEAM

- The team consisted of a night shift Lead Nurse, the Clinical Educator, the Unit Director, and collaboration with the health system's Department of Nursing Research and Education (NRE).



METHOD FOR IMPROVEMENT

- To increase the number of certified nurses and validate their advanced knowledge, the Department of Nursing developed a health system-wide Dare to Be Certified Campaign, which included a campaign logo, web page, review course reimbursement, and opportunities for formal recognition.
- Recognizing the chance to customize the campaign to the unit level, leaders on an adult cardiothoracic unit launched a complimentary initiative to increase the number of PCCN certifications amongst their nursing staff. ⁴
- This initiative was focused on creating and sustaining a culture of meaningful recognition of clinical expertise. ⁵

INTERVENTIONS

Staff Engagement

- Key elements included discussion during huddles and staff meetings about the benefits of certification, reduction of the fear of failure by emphasizing knowledge gained from the review courses and materials, publicity of available review courses, removal of scheduling barriers, and sharing of study materials.
- Additionally, the unit leadership leveraged positive peer pressure to encourage staff members, and they facilitated an informal mentoring program that allowed a senior nurse to guide less-experienced nurses through the process.

Peer to Peer Support

- Peer to peer support can help address certification barriers by reducing test anxiety, fear of failure, and perceived lack of value. ⁶
- Review materials and resources were gathered and shared, such as PCCN review books, online resources, and sample questions.
- The Lead (Charge) Nurse reviewed questions and scenarios during the shift and during huddles between shifts.
- The team created and distributed a list of study tips and topics recommended by those who took the exam.
- Study questions were incorporated into unit based classes "PCCN Challenge!"
- Group study on the unit, lots of encouragement, "You got this!"

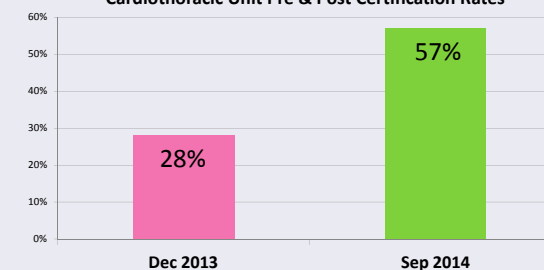
Meaningful Recognition

- As defined by AACN in the Standards for a healthy work environment: "Recognition of the value and meaningfulness of one's contribution to an organization's work is a fundamental human need and an essential requisite to personal and professional development." ⁷
- Meaningful recognition has been shown to be of value and can be a motivator to obtain specialty certification. ⁸
- UCLA offers a monthly stipend for certified nurses, in addition to jackets and gifts distributed during the Annual Certification Day celebration.
- On the cardiothoracic unit, new certifications were recognized at shift huddles, staff meetings, via emails to the nursing executive team, and on the unit dashboard, where staff members were able to keep track of the rapidly rising certification rate on the unit.

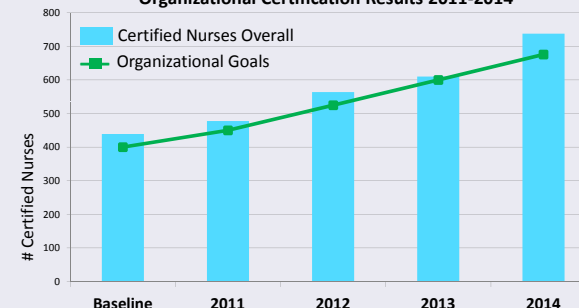


OUTCOMES

Cardiothoracic Unit Pre & Post Certification Rates



Organizational Certification Results 2011-2014



CONCLUSION

A successful campaign to increase specialty certification is comprised of several elements: institutional support, unit leadership support, staff engagement, peer to peer support and mentorship, availability of study materials and resources, and meaningful recognition.

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