

# CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST DESIGNED CERTIFICATION PREPARATION COURSE

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## PURPOSE

- The purpose was to implement a CNS-led medical-surgical certification preparation course for medical-surgical nurses.

## SIGNIFICANCE

- The CNS competencies provide a basis for CNSs' design of a medical-surgical preparation course.
- Nursing certification may have many benefits to organizations through:
  - Increased nursing competence and confidence
  - Improved patient care
  - Promotion of professional growth
  - Indication of knowledge and expertise in a specialty

## BACKGROUND

- There is no formal medical-surgical certification preparation course at the organization.
- This course was requested by practicing medical-surgical nurses and institutional leadership.
- Magnet status and career ladders elevate the importance of attaining nursing certifications.
- CNSs' design of a certification preparation course has received little attention in the academic literature.

## REFERENCES

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## METHODS

- Two CNSs collaborated to implement the medical-surgical certification preparation course by:
  - Planning each preparation session
  - Advertising
  - Developing instructional materials: Power Point presentations, handouts, discussion items, practice test questions and review games
  - Acquiring study resources: books, flashcards and certification test outline
  - Fostering a safe learning environment via sensitivity to potential participant stressors
  - Analyzing evaluation data
  - Disseminating findings
- Topics included in the review course were:
  - Navigating certification websites
  - Identifying testable material
  - Cultivating study skills
  - Deciphering test questions
  - Identifying perceived barriers to studying/learning
  - Addressing known areas of weakness
  - Decreasing test anxiety
  - Taking tests and study tips
- Participants' knowledge was assessed by administering a 10-question pretest/posttest covering certification test content.
- The CNS led medical-surgical certification preparation course was evaluated by administering a Certification Preparation Course Survey consisting of a pre- (12 item) and post-survey (16 item).

Table 1: Certification Preparation Course Survey Results:	
Perceived benefits for obtaining medical-surgical certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased quality of care</li><li>• Increased professional growth</li><li>• Increased self-confidence</li><li>• Increased personal empowerment</li><li>• Increased compensation</li></ul>
Perceived barriers for taking the medical-surgical certification exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate study skills</li><li>• Lack of confidence</li><li>• Lack of study materials</li><li>• Lack of time to study</li><li>• Scheduling conflicts</li><li>• Cost of exam</li></ul>
Items learned by participating in the medical-surgical certification preparation course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gained more knowledge</li><li>• New material</li><li>• Content review</li><li>• How to decipher test questions</li></ul>
Benefits of participating in the medical-surgical certification preparation course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved patient care</li><li>• Improved study skills</li><li>• Increased confidence</li><li>• Increased professional networking</li><li>• Increased collegiality</li><li>• Increased skill and comfort in interacting with peers</li><li>• Achieved goals</li></ul>

## OUTCOME

- The medical-surgical certification preparation course included five sessions (1.5 hours each) over a six-week period (n=6 nurses).
- Pretest results were 38%.
- Posttest results were 84%.
- The Certification Preparation Preparation Course Survey results were positive (See Table 1).
- For the survey item, "I plan to take the medical-surgical nursing certification exam" results were yes (n=5) and maybe (n=1).
- Perceived degree of anxiousness when taking a test was measured using a 4-point Likert Scale (higher scores equalling more anxiety).
- Mean perceived anxiety scores were pre- (3) and post-survey (1.7).
- All participants reported: learning additional content; content presented was valuable; presenters and teaching methods were effective; practice questions were beneficial; personal goals were attained; course expectations were met; the environment was conducive for learning.

## INTERPRETATION

- Results indicate a CNS-led medical-surgical certification preparation course was an effective strategy to increase knowledge about medical-surgical content.
- CNSs should plan to conduct additional on-site medical-surgical certification preparation courses.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Future evaluation should include the number of participants who obtained certification within one year of taking the medical-surgical certification preparation course.
- CNSs should recruit more nurses to participate in future medical-surgical certification preparation courses.
- Future medical-surgical certification preparation courses should include more content questions.