

Critical Concepts

The newsletter of the Greater Portland Chapter of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses

October, 2009

President's Address: Excellence in Promoting Certification By Your GPC President Cynthia Perez

GPC AACN President Cynthia Perez recently submitted for an AACN "Circle of Excellence" Chapter Award for "Excellence in Promoting the Value of Certification." Here is her submission, "A Strategic Goal to Increase Certification." We hope to hear soon if the GPC has achieved this high honor!

The Greater Portland Chapter (GPC) of Critical Care Nurses encourages and promotes professional nursing through certification. Last year, the GPC took the lead from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) to promote and increase certification among members.

The AACN website offers many reasons why nurses, families, patients, and organizations value certification. Certification can provide nurses with a sense of validation that they possess the knowledge and skills to effectively and safely provide critical care. Upon passing these challenging exams, many nurses express a renewed belief in themselves, a sense that, "I really do belong here."

The members of the GPC board believe strongly that certification programs are a mark of excellence, providing nurses a way to validate their specialized knowledge, skills and abilities against the national standard. In our experience, certification validates knowledge of nursing in a specialty area to hospitals, peers, patients and most importantly, to our members. We recognize that certification promotes continuing excellence in the nursing profession and nurses who belong to their local chapter are professionals.

In addition, a research study published by Ann Cary in the January 2001 edition of the *American Journal of Nursing* provided initial evidence that certification may give nurse the means or opportunity to practice in a manner likely to improve outcomes. According to Diane Tompkins, assistant director of certification services at the ANCC, "Nursing certification leads to improved patient outcomes by requiring certified nurses to remain up to date on current knowledge and practices, which then leads to improved critical-thinking skills, better patient assessments, and earlier interventions."

Based on our belief in the many benefits of certification, the Board adopted a goal of supporting and encouraging certification. We set a target of increasing certification among our membership by 10% annually. Some strategies we put in place are listed below.

- Membership drives at local hospitals spearheaded by members of the GPC board
- CCRN/PCCN review classes offered 2 times annually
- Offer of a one year GPC membership to all who register to test following review course
- Articles published in the GPC newsletter addressing the value of certification
- Article published in the GPC newsletter on "How to register for group certification"
- Tracking increased percentages of certified nurse and providing a progress report in each GPC newsletter so members can visualize improvement over time
- Recognition of certified nurses at the Critical Care Symposium
- Collecting and distributing information to members about the many employers who offer financial incentives to attract and keep certified nurses at their facilities

One of our board members is the Critical Care CNS at the Portland VA, which took advantage of the, "Let's get certified!" campaign, allowing many of their nurses to acquire certification at discounted rates. Another Board member works on a Beacon unit which has achieved an eightfold increase in certification over the past three years by arranging group registration, purchasing study materials, and providing peer feedback and support.

With the strategies we have put in place, the certification rate for GPC membership jumped from 36% to 47% last year! Our goal is to maintain this momentum and increase certification another 10% this year.





Portland VA Receives National Recognition for Certification! By Jeanette Richardson

The Portland VA Medical Center (PVAMC) was recently recognized for its hospital-wide efforts in increasing its number of nurses with specialty certifications as the winner of the Achievement Award - Gold Level in the Office of Nursing Services "Let's Get Certified!" campaign.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) strongly supports the acquisition of specialty nursing certifications and in May, 2008 it launched a national campaign entitled "Let's Get Certified!" This program provided VA nurses with discounts on exam fees and study materials, examples of success strategies, and leadership talking points to encourage staff to pursue certification. The Critical Care Unit (CCU) at Portland VA Medical Center (PVAMC) enhanced this program with a comprehensive approach that offered test preparatory materials, a VA-sponsored 2 day CCRN review course, a weekly study group led by previously certified staff nurses, and recognition of individual certifications through the establishment of a "Staff Achievements" wall in a prominent area of the unit. In addition, PVAMC does offer a cash award for nursing specialty certifications and this information was socialized throughout the hospital.

Read about the Portland VAMC's achievement in the latest issue of [Bold Voices - August 2009](#)

From May, 2008 to May, 2009 the number of CCRN-certified nurses in the CCU increased from 7 to 26 while other areas within the hospital also promoted specialty nursing certifications. The hospital applied for the "Let's Get Certified!" award and, although many entries were submitted nationally from across VHA, PVAMC was recognized with this first place award for its creative and innovative approaches that supported the program goal to increase specialty certification and achieve 25% or more nurses certified plus 25% or more of direct care nurses certified. This recognition includes a monetary award which is earmarked for shared governance activities and promoting further specialty certification efforts.

We applaud our staff for recognizing the value of certification and in pursuing their own professional development to improve the care of our veterans.

Critical Care Symposium Call for Abstracts

Do you have research that you want to share with your colleagues in the area? The Greater Portland Chapter's Critical Care Symposium is calling for poster abstract submission for their 36th Annual Critical Care Symposium being held November 19th and 20th, 2009, in Vancouver, WA. The submission deadline has been extended to October 10th, 2009. Some general guidelines for submissions include:

- The first author must be a staff or advanced practice nurse working in a clinical setting with involvement in direct patient care
- Nursing students are eligible to participate if the research/project is related to critical care
- Abstracts may reflect work that has been completed within the past two years or in progress, provided data or results will be available for presentation at the conference
- Submission of an abstract does not preclude submission to a national/local professional meeting.
- Abstracts may focus on any aspect of nursing and nursing research.

Submissions are entitled to a \$50 discounted Symposium registration. Please visit <http://www.aacngpc.org/chapter-news-education/category/education/> for more information and to download a poster abstract submission form.

More Reasons to Take Care of Yourself— Self Care & Moral Distress

By GPC President Cynthia Perez, MS, RN, CNS, CCRN

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) believes that moral distress is one of the key issues affecting the workplace environment. Providing self-care in order to take action against moral distress is part of AACN's strategic initiative to create a healthy work environment.

AACN Policy Position

"Moral distress is a critical, frequently ignored, problem in healthcare work environments. Not addressed, it restricts nurses' ability to provide optimal patient care and to find job satisfaction. AACN asserts that every nurse and every employer are responsible for implementing programs to address and mitigate the harmful effects of moral distress in the pursuit of creating a healthy work environment."

AACN's 4A's to Rise above Moral Distress:

1. Ask: Am I feeling distressed or showing signs of suffering? Is the source of my distress work related?
2. Affirm your distress and your commitment to **take care of yourself**
3. Assess: Identify sources of your distress – personal or environmental
4. Act: **Prepare personally and professionally** to take action

Prepare to Act - Self-Care and Moral distress:

Addressing internal and external barriers, reducing risks, and maximizing your strengths will be necessary to take action. Consider personal changes that will make you a more viable agent of change. Develop a self-care plan that may include:

- Clarify your personal values about self-care
- Create time in your schedule for self-care activities
- Engage in self-care activities such as:
 - Keep a journal
 - Get a massage
 - Spend time with friends and family
 - Eat a healthy diet
 - Engage in exercise or other physical activities
 - Dedicate time to exploring your hobbies
 - Engage in spiritual work such as attending church or meditation

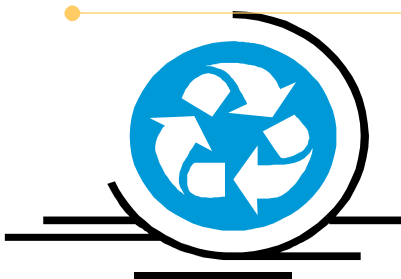


Click below to read more about AACN's [4 A's To Rise Above Moral Distress](#)

Providing self-care is not only recognized (and encouraged) by AACN but also by the American Nurses Association (ANA). Provision 5 of the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses states: "The nurse owes the same **duties to self** as to others, including the responsibility to preserve integrity and safety, to maintain competence, and to continue personal and professional growth."

Establishing and sustaining healthy work environments, which includes rising above moral distress, must be a priority if nurses are going to make their optimal contributions in caring for patients and patients' families. Follow the recommendations of your professional organizations, take care of yourselves and encourage your colleagues to do the same!

To read more on AACN's 4 A's to rise above moral distress, click on the link below:
[http://www.aacn.org/WD/Practice/Docs/4As to Rise Above Moral Distress.pdf](http://www.aacn.org/WD/Practice/Docs/4As%20to%20Rise%20Above%20Moral%20Distress.pdf)



In keeping with global efforts to reduce, reuse, & recycle, the GPC welcomes you to our first **GREEN** issue! This and subsequent issues will be available via email and online at www.aacngpc.org!

36th Annual Critical Care Symposium November 19th & 20th !



Don't forget—bring 3 cans of food to help local families AND to receive a raffle ticket for great door prizes!

GPC-AACN in collaboration with OSCCM has done it again. The 36th Annual Symposium registration is open and registrations are steadily coming in. If you have not received a brochure one can be printed off our website at www.aacngpc.org. We expect record attendance so get that registration in the mail so you don't miss out!

The symposium committee has been hard at work to bring you experts from all over the country as well as locally. Once again, the site is at the Vancouver Hilton, conveniently located just off I-5 and the conference facilities are professional and comfortable. The vendor support has been amazing--they will be bringing the latest technology to you.

The symposium is organized with not only an adult patient population-learning track but also a pediatric track and CME's both days. In addition to Keynote Speaker John Kitzhaber some other well known speakers this year include: Dr. John Kress, Dr. Mark Crislip, Kathleen Vollman, Connie Barden, Dr. Mark Banks, Dr. Cathy Markin, Linda Littlejohns, Chris Shulman and many more.

In follow up to former Governor John Kitzhaber's address on *Healthcare for the 21st Century*, we will bring together a prestigious panel to address the critical issue of how these changes will affect our community. Moderator Lewis Lowe, MD, Senior Medical Director of Legacy Inpatient Medicine Service; Cynthia Gruber, CFO, OHSU Healthcare; Susan Mullaney, Executive Administrator, Kaiser Sunnyside; James Tuchs Schmidt, MD, Director, Portland VAMC; and Dave Underriner, CEO, Portland Region, Providence Health & Services, will be there to answer your questions.

We are collecting food for the Sunshine Division to help families locally. If you bring 3 cans of food you will receive a raffle ticket for door prizes. The more food you bring the better your chance to win!

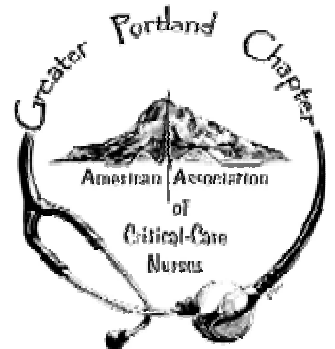
Don't miss out the best educational offering in the Northwest. The committee works hard to keep cost down to our members. GPC-AACN members receive a \$50.00 discount. Tell your colleagues, nurses, physicians, respiratory therapist and pharmacists.

See you in Vancouver! You won't be disappointed!

Did You Know...?

Here are some interesting facts about your Greater Portland Chapter of AACN...

- ❖ The GPC was formed in 1972
- ❖ The GPC first sponsored the Fall Critical Care Symposium in 1973
- ❖ Our GPC Administrative Assistant is Donna Hunter
- ❖ Our website is www.aacngpc.org
- ❖ The first GPC President was Barbara Morgan (Turton)
- ❖ The first GPC AACN Critical Care Consortium class was held Fall 1997
- ❖ 43 Critical Care Consortium classes have been held to date
- ❖ The GPC currently has over 450 members



Upcoming Events

- ❖ [36th Annual Critical Care Symposium](#), November 19th & 20th
- ❖ CCRN/PCCN Review Class, January 28th & 29th, 2010, details TBA
- ❖ GPC Member's Dinner, February, 2010, details TBA
- ❖ GPC Member's Breakfast, April, 2010, details TBA
- ❖ CCRN/PCCN Review Class, June 7th & 8th, details TBA
- ❖ GPC Board Meeting, 1st Thursday of every month, Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital

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