

# C is for Credentials

**C** is for credentials. Are nursing credentials confusing? I believed they can be. This month I am going to tackle the credential conundrum.

To become a registered professional nurse an individual must complete a course of study at an academic institution or in some cases a hospital. According to the course completed the individual graduates with an Associate Degree in Nursing (AD) from a two-year program, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from a four-year program, or a Diploma in Nursing from a two-year hospital based program. No graduate nurse (GN) from any program can be considered a Registered Nurse (RN) until they successfully pass the Board of Nursing Licensing Exam in the state in which they reside.

RNs may obtain specialty in nursing certifications which are approved by the American Board of Nursing Specialties. "Certification, as defined by ABNS is the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills and experiences demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty.

Each nursing specialty organization has determined criteria which must be met before the RN can sit for the certification board exam. Some of the more commonly known specialties include CCRN (critical care), CEN (emergency), CNOR (peri-operative), CCN (correctional), CRNI (infusion), CWCN (wound care), ONC (orthopedics), OCN (oncology) and many others. A directory of nursing specialties can be found at:

<http://www.testprepreview.com/nursing-certifications.htm>

An Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN or APN) is a RN who has completed a post-graduate education and received a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN). The APN may work as a generalist or a specialty capacity such as adult acute/critical care (ACNP), family practice (FNP), pediatrics (ACPNP), neonatology (APPN), gerontology (AGNP), and others.

Legal nurse consultants can also obtain certification in their specialty. The American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants Certification Board has determined the requirements for eligibility. The legal nurse consultant must have a current RN license, a minimum of five years experience practicing as a RN, and 2,000 billable hours within the past three years to sit for the board examination. Upon successful completion of the board exam the legal nurse consultant is awarded the Legal Nurse Consultant Certification (LNCC).

Is there a difference in the legal nurse consultant who has a certificate versus one who has achieved certification (LNCC)? Yes.

A certificate is given to legal nurse consultant who has completed a course of study. The LNCC is similar to specialty certification awarded to lawyers from the National Board of Legal Specialty Certification. It recognizes the experienced practitioner. The nurse holding the LNCC certification possesses the knowledge, skills and competency for quality practice in the specialty of legal nurse consulting.