

CNRN Corner

It Is Time to Renew My CNRN Credential—What Am I Supposed to Do?

Brek C. Macpherson, BSN RN CNRN CCRN

Every nurse who has worked hard to obtain the CNRN credential must renew every 5 years. For most CNRNs, that thought sits in the back of our minds as we move on with our daily activities of caring for patients, teaching new and experienced nurses, and completing research. Then, all of a sudden, it is your year to renew! You have kept your information current with ABNN (if you do not keep your information current [address, e-mail], we cannot remind you) and have now received a letter informing you that you must submit your renewal information by October 2, 2009. Luckily, especially for some of us who need a little extra time, there is a later deadline—January, 29, 2010—but it does require an extra fee.

Like most CNRNs, you may have vowed never to take the CNRN certification examination again. Although retaking the exam is one option for recertification, if you do not pass, you are not able to recertify by way of the second option—by providing documentation of the required continuing education hours (CEUs). If you choose to recertify by meeting CEU requirements, you may either complete 75 hours of qualified CEUs (for full-time nurses who have 4,160 hours of work with neuro patients) or 100 CEUs (for part-time nurses who have 2,500 hours of work with neuro patients) over the previous 5 years before you are due for recertification. Both options for recertification, retesting or completing CEU hours, require meeting the necessary practice hours in neuroscience nursing. It is important to review the practice and CEU requirements in the current *Recertification Handbook*, which can be found at www.cnrn.org.

Recertification by completing CEUs is not an easy task and should be completed over the 5 years that your CNRN credential allows. CEUs qualifying for recertification fall into six categories that have recently been reformatted. Category 1 is Neuroscience Nursing Education, the only **required** category. For recertification, full-time nurses must obtain a minimum of 30 Category 1 CEUs (40 hours for part-time nurses). Category 1 CEUs are acquired through attending neuroscience nursing courses or programs. The remaining categories are Category 2, Program or Project Activities; Category 3, Research; Category 4, Teaching; Category 5, Publication; and Category 6, Involvement in Professional Organizations. CEUs falling under these classifications qualify for fulfilling the CEU requirements after obtaining the minimum number needed for neuroscience nursing education. Each of these categories has a specific definition listed in the *Recertification Handbook*. If you have not kept track of your CEUs, it can be a very daunting endeavor when the time comes, especially if you find you do not have enough CEUs from the mandatory Category 1. All submitted activities must be relevant to the application or propagation of information CNRNs are expected to know to stay current in the practice of neuroscience nursing.

Last summer a very experienced CNRN (recertifying for the third time) asked me questions about practice hours and CEUs—I am the nurse educator in the neuro/trauma ICU. She asked,

I am getting ready to renew my CNRN. Do you have a list of all the neuro conferences we have had at the hospital the past few years? And do you have a list of the in-services I have attended that are related to neuroscience nursing? Also, do you know how many hours I have practiced in the last 5 years since I only work PRN and teach the rest of the time?

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As we researched her practice hours, we found that she could count the hours that she taught neuroscience content as practice hours along with her hours in the ICU. It turned out she had just enough practice hours in the ICU to meet the requirements for part-time nurses, but her CEUs were in question. She obtained a copy of the *Recertification Handbook* and application and began to count the CEUs she thought she had for each category. When she was done, it turned out that she didn't have enough Category 1 CEUs (23 of the required 40). She had enough other CEUs to make up the 100 in the remaining categories, but she still needed Category 1 CEUs. Our conversation continued.

Is there anything that I placed in Categories 2–6 that will qualify for Category 1?

Unfortunately, because Category 1 requires attendance in neuroscience-nursing-related courses or presentations, the other categories cannot be shifted into Category 1.

We continued to review other options for CEUs she could have taken advantage of during the past 5 years. One that stood out was AANN's free CEUs for AANN members, during Neuroscience Nurses week provided by the *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*. This option could have provided several Category 1 CEUs each year. Another helpful suggestion was that she should organize her CEUs as she obtained them so that it was not such a hassle when it came time to recertify. The AANN bookstore has a great CNRN CE Tracker, described as "a special binder with inserts and folders to assist you in organizing certificates and other materials that will document your continuing education." This nurse had received one from the local Neurological Institute as a gift for Neuroscience Nurses week, but it was yet to be opened. Another often-overlooked option is service on an AANN, ABNN, or NNF committees. This includes CNRN Exam Question Writing (must meet certain qualifications), serving on ABNN's Test Development Committee, participating in a Role Delineation Study, and others. Neuroscience presentations and in-services may also count towards needed CEUs, as do article publications in a peer-reviewed journal and poster presentations at the AANN Annual Educational Meeting.

As the later deadline loomed, many hours were spent reviewing *JNN* CE articles and submitting them for credit. A valuable lesson was learned. This nurse is already using the CNRN CE Tracker and is planning to attend next year's annual educational meeting in Baltimore, MD, to assist in gaining Category 1 CEUs for the next recertification in 2014. See if you can learn from one nurse's last-minute work. If you are a new CNRN, talk with those who have renewed in the past and find tips that have helped them organize their CEUs so that you can avoid the last-minute panic.

Reference

AANN Online Store. (2008). Retrieved June 7, 2008 from www.aann.org/credential/Recert.html.

Melanie Minton CNRN of the Year Award

The Melanie Minton CNRN of the Year Award was presented to Pat Zrelak, PhD RN CNA-BC CNRN, at the CNRN Recognition Breakfast at the AANN 41st Annual Educational Meeting in Las Vegas, NV. Zrelak, who has been a CNRN since 2004, was nominated by two of her past employees for the passion and commitment she has for stroke and neuroscience nursing.

She currently works at the University of California at Davis Medical Center as the administrative nurse for the stroke program and the lead nurse researcher for the AHRQ Patient

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Safety Indicator Pilot Validation Project. She is also adjunct faculty at Samuel Merritt University School of Nursing in Oakland, CA, where she teaches biostatistics and epidemiology. In addition, she is an active member of her local AANN chapter and AANN's Clinical Practice Guidelines series editorial board.

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The results of the 2009 Board of Trustees election are in! ABNN is pleased to present the 2009–2010 Board of Trustees, including new trustees Susan B. Fowler, PhD RN CNRN FAHA, and Jennifer Sulanke, MS CNS RN CNRN.

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Heather Hodge's career in neuroscience started with her first job after nursing school graduation. Over the years, she has gained experience in neuroscience intensive care, acute neurology and neurosurgery units, epilepsy monitoring unit, outpatient neurology clinics, and neurology research. She has been a member of AANN for 19 years and became a CNRN 13 years ago. She has presented at AANN Annual Educational Meetings and has been a special focus group leader. She has published several papers and abstracts in the *JNN*, as well as other medical journals.

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Joanne Turner serves as the clinical nurse specialist for neuroscience at Morristown Memorial Hospital in Morristown, NJ. Her roles include participation on the stroke team for the 650-bed regional medical center; involvement with neuro patients in the emergency department, ICU, and general medical-surgical floors; and contributions to neuro education for nursing and ancillary staff, as well as the community. She has been active in AANN and certified as a neuroscience nurse for 7 years. She has been a recipient of the AANN Advance Practice Nurse of the Year Award (2007) and the American Association of Critical Care Nurses Circle of Excellence Award for community service.

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