

Exhibiting pride in the profession: Making the case for continued professional development

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Nursing is a profession. Although the art and science has become more science than art due to advances in technology and regulatory requirements, the profession of nursing is among the most trusted in modern society. How do we continue to earn that trust and respect? One could argue that looking after our professional development through ongoing education and certification gives us the confidence to move forward and meet any challenge that we encounter in this complex healthcare environment.

Investing in professional development is not only beneficial to nurses practicing in today’s healthcare environment, but is also a way to practice safely while protecting patients. Caring for patients in a safe and compassionate manner is a herculean task. Nurses need every advantage at their disposal to keep up with practice and regulatory demands. Participating in and seeking out new challenges through continuing education and specialty certification provides a strong and expanding foundation of knowledge to afford nurses the tools to remain at the top of their game. Because one has gained, through sheer longevity, expert status in their chosen area of practice; does not mean that additional expertise can neither be attained nor utilized through ongoing professional development.

From the patient’s perspective, having nurses who care about competence in their role by participating in continuing education and certification, is comforting. Ongoing professional development sends a message to patients that their caregiver is committed to provide the best care possible by constantly striving for more education in their chosen specialty. While studies have not been able to prove unequivocally that certification results in improved patient outcomes, it seems reasonable

to hypothesize that nurses who regularly participate in continuing education will have a better skill set that they can employ in their everyday practice.

Finally, because the nursing profession is one of great diversity, it is conceivable and even likely that nurses will move into different specialty areas of nursing through their career. It is unlikely, however, that nurses who change direction in specialties will want to remain novices in their new area of practice. This then puts a nurse on a trajectory of life-long learning and ongoing professional development. And that perhaps, is as it should be.

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Conflicts of interest

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