

New Nursing Survey from ABNS Finds RNs Have Wide Range of Specialty Certification Options

In advance of Certified Nurses Day (March 19), the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) today announced the results of its first major survey of U.S.-based nursing specialty certification boards. The purpose of the 2020 ABNS Nursing Specialty Certification Board Survey was to describe the scope of nursing specialty credentials available to registered nurses (RNs) and advanced practice RNs (APRNs).

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“Specialty certified nurses play a significant role in improving patient care and a host of healthcare outcomes,” said ABNS President and Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing CEO, Janie Schumaker, MBA, BSN, RN, CEN, CPHQ, CENP, FABC. “The fact that over 1 million RNs and APRNs practicing across a wide range of specialties have demonstrated this level of excellence is a testament to the indispensable contributions nurses make around the globe.”

In May and June 2020, ABNS invited 56 certifying bodies to describe the specialty credentials they offer to RNs and/or APRNs via an online survey. Forty-four organizations responded, including 30 of ABNS's 31 members, for a response rate of 79%.

Key findings of the survey (see [infographic](#)) include:

- There are over 1 million specialty certified RNs and APRNs.
- The 44 respondents offer 148 credentials spanning 53 specialty and subspecialty areas.
- 86% of these credentials are available internationally, 57% are Magnet®-accepted, and 72% of the certification programs are accredited by ABSNC, NCCA or both.

Respondents were asked to select up to three nursing specialty or subspecialty areas (from a list of 59 options) that best characterize the primary practice focus of the nurses holding each of their credentials.

The 10 most-selected specialty areas were: critical care, pediatrics, neonatal care, medical-surgical, wound/ostomy/continence, disease-specific, emergency, hospice/palliative care, ambulatory care, and cardiac care.

Additionally, of the 148 credentials:

- 76 (51%) are for RNs and APRNs
- 29 (20%) are for RNs only
- 43 (29%) are for APRNs only, of which 24 are for APRN initial licensure

Specialty certification for RNs is voluntary and occurs after, and separate from, RN licensure. To become an

APRN, an individual must earn an advanced practice specialty certification as part of their licensure requirements. After licensure, an APRN may earn additional specialty certifications to deepen or expand their specialty expertise as well as maintain specialty certifications they earned as an RN.

Schumaker added, “ABNS is incredibly proud to represent specialty nursing certification, and we are deeply appreciative of all nurses serving patients and communities in this challenging time. They have our sincerest gratitude.”

For more information about the ABNS survey and nursing specialty certification, visit <http://www.nursingcertification.org/resource>.

About ABNS

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) is a not-for-profit membership organization governed by an elected group of member representatives. Founded in 1991, ABNS represents 31 member specialty nursing credentialing organizations and over 920,000 board certified licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and advanced practice nurses (APRNs) practicing around the globe in a variety of settings. With a mission to promote the value of specialty nursing certification, ABNS also serves as a forum for nursing credentialing organizations to connect and dialogue about the specific issues that certified nurses and those seeking certification face. For more information about ABNS, visit <http://www.nursingcertification.org>.

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