

## **NAON Position Statement Orthopaedic Nurse Certification**

### **Issue**

“Almost every household in America is affected in some way by diseases of bones, joints, muscles, and skin” (National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, 2009). Musculoskeletal disorders and diseases are the leading cause of disability in the United States and account for more than one-half of all chronic conditions in people over 50 years of age in developed countries (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 2008). Approximately 21% of the adult United States population reports a diagnosis of arthritis (Helmick, 2008) and approximately 50% of the adult population reported having a disabling musculoskeletal condition (National Center for Health Statistics, 2009). With the increasing growth of our aging population, musculoskeletal impairments are expected to increase. The older population also has more co-morbidities making nursing care more challenging. It is critical that nurses caring for patients of all ages with musculoskeletal conditions be qualified to provide quality care.

### **NAONs Position**

The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses supports orthopaedic nursing certification as provided by Orthopaedic Nurse Certification Board (ONCB). The ONCB certification program is rigorous and the certification is a sound, legally defensible measure of orthopaedic nursing knowledge. Orthopaedic nurse certification validates nurses' attainment of stringent requirements for knowledge and experience and indicates the ability to provide competent orthopaedic nursing care. Orthopaedic nurse certification benefits patients and their families, nurses, and employers across all settings where nursing care is provided for musculoskeletal conditions. All nurses who provide care to patients with musculoskeletal conditions should seek to become certified by ONCB. NAON encourages employers to hire orthopaedic-certified nurses, support employed nurses in attaining and maintaining certification, reward nurses who become certified, and inform patients and the public about the certification status of their nursing staff.

### **Background/Rationale**

The ONCB® was founded by the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses in 1986 in response to a request from the membership for a certification program to further establish orthopaedic nursing as a specialty and to recognize expertise in the field. ONCB continues to uphold these goals by defining minimum performance standards and developing a mechanism to distinguish those nurses who meet the standards. ONCB maintains a fair, valid, and reliable certification program. In addition, ONCB certification is based on empirical research that is conducted on a regular basis and links the content of the certification examinations directly to practice.

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) (2005) defined nursing certification as “the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal patient care.” Orthopaedic nurse certification provides tangible evidence that nurses have the knowledge required to provide effective care to patients experiencing the complex problems associated with a musculoskeletal diagnosis at any stage of life. The ONC® credential indicates that a nurse has attained basic orthopaedic certification. As of June 30, 2009, over 5,500 nurses hold the ONC credential awarded by ONCB. Advanced credentials (OCNS-C® and ONP-C®) indicate a nurse has attained orthopaedic certification at the advanced level as a clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner. As of June 30, 2009, nearly 200 nurses had received advanced credentials.

## References

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- National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS). (2009). *Mission*. Retrieved from [http://www.niams.nih.gov/About\\_Us/Mission\\_and\\_Purpose/director.asp](http://www.niams.nih.gov/About_Us/Mission_and_Purpose/director.asp)

## Links for additional resources/information

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. (2008). *Unites States Bone and Joint Decade: The burden of musculoskeletal diseases in the United States*. Rosemont, IL: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. <http://www.boneandjointburden.org/>
- American Board of Nursing Specialties. <http://www.nursingcertification.org/>