



Why Certify?

Since the first RNs earned orthopaedic certification in 1988, over 12,000 nurses have proudly held the ONC credential. Today, nearly 7000 orthopaedic-certified nurses, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists demonstrate excellence in the care of persons with musculoskeletal health concerns.

Why did they choose certification? A representative sample of over 300 orthopaedic-certified nurses responded to a survey from the Orthopaedic Nurses Certification Board (ONCB) to confirm why they value their credentials and maintain specialty certification.

Their answers offer compelling reasons for nurses to get, and keep, orthopaedic nursing certification.

Value for the Nurse

- Enhances feeling of personal accomplishment.
- Enhances personal confidence in clinical abilities.
- Provides personal satisfaction.
- Provides professional challenge.
- Indicates professional growth.
- Enhances professional autonomy.
- Provides evidence of accountability.
- Provides evidence of professional commitment.
- Increases marketability.
- Increases salary.

Value for Employers & the Public

- Validates specialized knowledge.
- Indicates level of clinical competence.
- Indicates attainment of a practice standard.
- Enhances professional credibility.
- Promotes recognition from peers.
- Promotes recognition from other health care professionals.
- Promotes recognition from employers.
- Increases consumer confidence.



Nurse Manager Survey Results

The American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) surveyed a convenience sample of 139 attendees at a nursing management conference in 2002 (Stromborg et al., 2005). ONCB replicated this survey in September 2019 to determine if nurse managers’ perceptions of specialty nursing certification had changed in the intervening 17 years. A convenience sample of potential nurse managers in the data base of the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses received the survey, with 82 responding.

Nurse manager was operationally defined as one who “oversees patient care, makes management and budgetary decisions, sets work schedules, coordinates meetings and makes personnel decisions (e.g., hiring).”

Both ABNS and ONCB surveys requested response to the following: “Assuming all other qualifications were equal, I would prefer to hire a certified nurse.”

- ABNS survey (Stromborg et al., 2005): 85% of respondents indicated they would hire a certified nurse if all other qualifications were equal.
- ONCB survey: Average score for this statement was 4.5, indicating a high degree of agreement.

Survey Statement – Top 10 (of 20) Items	Mean score (1-5 scale)	ABNS Survey Results* (% agreement with statement)
A certified nurse...		
Has a proven knowledge base in a given specialty.	4.8	75.5
Demonstrates a greater professional commitment to lifelong learning.	4.6	67.6
Has documented experience in a given specialty.	4.8	54.7
Is a role model and mentor for others.	4.7	51.8
Demonstrates increased confidence.	4.6	48.2
Serves as an informal and formal leader within the unit.	4.6	46.8
Positively impacts patient outcomes.	4.7	43.2
Practices with greater autonomy.	4.5	41.7
Contributes better to the overall quality of patient care delivery.	4.6	38.8
Is a better preceptor.	4.5	36.7

*Stromborg et al., 2005

Conclusions

- Certified nurses clearly value their credentials as part of their professional development.
- Nurse managers indicated certification does play a part in their hiring practices, reflecting their perception over time that certified nurses are valued members of the healthcare team.
- Anecdotal reports of practice changes, including financial assistance with maintenance of certification as well as provision of a bonus or differential, suggest healthcare leaders’ growing desire to recognize and reward practice excellence through specialty nursing certification.