



## News Release

### "LEGAL DEFENSIBILITY" OF CERTIFICATION CREDENTIALS DEFINED AT WOCN CONFERENCE

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At a presentation during the recent Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Society's (WOCN) 37th Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Cathy Thomas Hess, RN, BSN, CWOCN, discussed the importance of being certified by an organization whose credentials are "legally defensible."

Ms. Hess, a board member of the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB), told an audience of WOC nurses that to offer legally defensible credentials; the certifying body must have stringent standards and procedures in place and scrupulously follow them.

Ms. Hess explained that the process for developing a legally defensible credential is complex and arduous. It begins with sending a job analysis survey to certified and non-certified individuals in the specialty to determine what they do in their day-to-day practices. "A job analysis can be thought of as a detailed job description," said Ms. Hess. "Only after the job analysis data have been thoroughly analyzed, can the certifying board begin writing questions for its certification examination," she continued. Job analyses are typically performed every three to five years because new technologies, procedures or therapies can change nursing practices that were once accepted but have been replaced by newer ones.

To ensure the finished examination is reliable and valid, psychometric principles must be applied to each exam question. (Psychometrics is the scientific study of testing.) Certification boards usually hire a professional testing company to perform the psychometric analysis. The testing company also guides individuals on the certification board's examination committee to write clear and concise questions and answers for the exam.

"Being able to legally defend the validity of an examination's objectives are crucial in the United States, whenever there is the potential for a hiring decision to be made based on criteria such as certification," explained Ms. Hess. "There is the potential that someone might file a lawsuit against the certifying body claiming that the exams are biased and constructed in an unfair manner. The job analysis survey is critical in proving the legal defensibility of the exam objectives and blunting any criticism of bias."

To help individuals determine if a certifying body's credentials would be legally defensible and valid, they should ask the following questions:



WOCNCB is accredited  
by the National  
Commission for  
Certifying Agencies

**ABNS**

WOCNCB is a member  
of the American Board  
of Nursing Specialties



WOCNCB is recognized  
as an organizational  
affiliate of the  
American Nurses  
Association

1. Is the credentialing organization accredited by an independent, national certifying body?
2. Was a job analysis or role delineation study performed prior to creating the examination?
3. Was the examination created by a committee of content experts in the field?
4. Does the certifying organization's mission agree with the mission of the work environment of the individual seeking certification?
5. Does the certifying organization provide self-assessment (or practice) to measure professional knowledge and prepare test-takers for the actual credentialing exam?
6. Does the certifying organization require that the coursework be completed by an outside, accredited program focusing on the specialty being tested?

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board is a professional organization dedicated to providing consumer safety and protection by offering credentialing in the areas of wound, ostomy and continence (WOC) care nursing to registered nurses who meet WOCNCB's stringent qualifications and pass its certification examination. WOC certified nurses provide quality care to patients in a variety of settings, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, and home healthcare. The WOCNCB has certified more than 4,200 nurses in the United States.

For more information, contact the WOCNCB, (888) 496-2622, [info@wocncb.org](mailto:info@wocncb.org) or visit the [www.wocncb.org](http://www.wocncb.org) website to view the presentation.

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