“Strength in Numbers”
Achieving Nurse Certifications for Large Groups Using a Three-Pronged Approach

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Problem
Prior to 2019, 0% of eligible nurses were cardiac certified on the telemetry unit despite years of effort & money spent on review classes.

Literature
Certified nurses experience less burnout and report much higher job satisfaction.1
The average cost of turnover for a staff RN is $52,350, but certified nurses have lower hospital turnover rates.2
Certified nurses have lower 30-day mortality, failure-to-rescue rates, and fewer medical errors.3

Goal
Increase percentage of eligible nurses on the telemetry unit to become cardiac certified within a year.

Method
Utilized the S.M.A.R.T. Goals method (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound).

Sample
Eligible cardiac bedside nurses on the telemetry unit

Strategy: The 3-Prong Approach!

First Prong: Comprehensive Study Plan
• Single-Source: Comprehensive, single review course with a high CE value.
• Set-up: Review course broken down into 12 weekly study goals.
• Self-Guided: Nurses could follow the study plan independently.
• Senses: Selected review course was appealing to most types of learners

Second Prong: Creative Coaching
• Peer Led: a certified nurse was assigned to coach a nurse actively preparing for certification exam.
• Personalized: coach would trouble-shoot barriers to help nurse stay on track.
• Perpetual: coach support was ongoing until the nurse became certified.
• Positive: Approach of the coach was enthusiastic & encouraging

Third Prong: Create Commitment
• Celebratory Recruitment: nurses were recruited to participate in the 12-week study plan as a group. Kick-off week was exciting with food, decorated breakroom, and gifts.
• Celebratory Accountability: names of participating nurses were posted publicly in the breakroom. Nurses were asked to pre-schedule their exam date 4 months from start date.
• Celebratory Recognition: after a nurse passed their certification exam, the unit celebrated with unit party, personalized gift, & large banner with their photo & new credentials displayed.

Results
100% cardiac certification exam passing rate using the 3-prong approach
Although the program was intended for the telemetry unit, nurses from other areas of hospital, requested to participate, resulting in 65 participating nurses during the first round.
Halfway through the first round of the program, there was a waiting list of nurses wanting to participate in the next round.
Celebrations of nurses who passed their exam always added more nurses to the waiting list.

Limitations
• Implementation of the first round of the 3-prong approach was impacted by COVID; many nurses had to drop out of the program.
• As more new nurses became eligible, the overall percentage certified declined in 2023.

Conclusions
• The interest of nurses getting specialty certified is very high.
• The 3-prong approach addressed barriers that were previously invisible.
• The percentage of eligible nurses becoming certified improved following implementation of the 3-prong approach.
• Positive peer support reported as helpful for successful program completion.
• 3-Prong approach progressed nurses through the stages of obtaining certification without getting stalled.

Implications for Practice
Implementing the 3-Prong approach to nursing units yearly may improve nurse certifications.

References

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