



THE CANADIAN GERONTOLOGICAL NURSE

Fall
2019





*President's Corner –
Writing the Gerontological Certification Exam –
An Act of Stewardship
By Lori Schindel Martin, CGNA President*

CGNA Mission - The mission of CGNA is to address the health and quality of life of older Canadians and the nurses who participate with them in health care.

CGNA Vision - The vision of CGNA is to promote excellence in gerontological nursing through leadership, knowledge, and scholarship.

Last week I experienced a positive surge of energy looking out over a sea of 4th year nursing student faces shining with excitement as they enter their final year. A large number of these students will have their clinical placements in long-term care homes located throughout the GTA. As you might imagine, whilst some of the students would rather be placed in one of the large metropolitan teaching hospitals, many of these students are tremendously exuberant about the potential to gain expanded gerontological nursing knowledge. In order to spread this enthusiasm, our 4th year teaching team delivered a slide deck presentation listing all the nursing knowledge and skills that students will acquire during a consolidation placement in a long-term care home. The list was long. Very long. Rich with gerontological expertise useful in any future career. You all know that list, don't you! Relational care is central to gerontological nursing practice, however, there are physical assessment, procedural and technical skills that are unique and of critical importance to the wellbeing and care of older people and their families.

So, this is where the concept of *Stewardship* in gerontological nursing is relevant. Imagine what a collective influence for advocacy, activism and policy change we would have if as many of us as possible become certified gerontological nurses? For the longest time I held back from writing the GNC(C) exam. I mean, what if I flunked, for heaven's sake? I do not enjoy writing multiple choice exams. But ... I decided to register this past spring and write that exam, because my husband said something wise to me. 'Don't you want to join your colleagues and students who've demonstrated their expertise and knowledge by writing?' He was right, so I applied to register, and I took all the advice given to students who are prepping to write their registration exams – I focused on the goal and I went for it. And it was fun! I enrolled in Lillian Hung's GNC Study Group at VGH, attending online on Thursday evenings from my dining room table. The sessions were an hour long and jam-packed with informative, clear and interesting slides summarizing important key points. The hour sped by; I found the sessions energizing and inspiring – Yes, gerontological nurses hold a LOT of knowledge. I learned that others enrolled in the study group had great questions for the guest speakers and were as enthusiastic as I was about answering the practice exam questions discussed every week. The list of presenters was very impressive, further reinforcing that gerontological nurses are a fantastic group willing to share their wonderful knowledge.



To prepare further, I reviewed all the archived slide decks and my notes from Lillian's study group. I also had two Canadian gerontological nursing textbooks at hand that I could review and read. Reading these Canadian books further inspired me to embed additional gerontological content in this year's student courses. The texts are:

Boscart, V.*, & **McCleary, L. *** (2012). *Ebersole and Hess' gerontological nursing & healthy aging* (1st Canadian ed.). Toronto: Elsevier Canada.

Hirst, S.P. *, Lane, A.M., & Miller, C.A. (2015). *Miller's nursing for wellness in older adults* (Canadian ed.). New York: Wolters Kluwer.

(* = CGNA Past-Presidents)

On May 15, the exam day, my palms were sweaty, but I was confident and felt well prepared having also written the practice test available through the CNA certification resources website. And... I passed. I am very proud and excited that I can now put GNC(C) beside my name. I feel especially proud when I tell my students that I know what it feels like to have recently written a multiple choice exam: you start worried and a little anxious, but within 10 minutes you are on a roll and you realize just how much you really do know. I'm so happy to join those of my peers who are GNC certified. I congratulate you all for your own success. For those of you considering this step – there is a whole group of cheerleaders who are waiting for you to join this fall's National GNC Exam Study Group. Imagine us all as GNC(C)s influencing change together!

Yours in Gerontological Nursing,

Lori Schindel Martin, RN, PhD, GNC(C)

Past-President's Message– Reflections on Certification in Gerontological Nursing

By Mollie Cole



In 2002 I joined a group of 60 Nurses in Calgary to study together for the CNA Certification exam in Gerontological Nursing – my sons, now young adults, well remember the reframe during the key weeks of studying: “When mommy’s finished writing this exam we can do that.” It was SO worth the effort – shortly after obtaining my certification I was asked a question at work about the currency of a clinical approach – my first thought went to “who can I locate to answer that question” when I suddenly realized with pride that having just reviewed much of the Gerontological nursing knowledge base, I was, in fact, qualified to take on that question!

I have now renewed my certification 3 times (required every 5 years) since first becoming certified. My focus of current Gerontological nursing content has become deeper over the years, but narrower, than after my first writing of the exam that covered the breadth of our nursing specialty.

Renewal: Each time I have renewed my certification by submitting evidence of 100 hours of continuing learning (CL) in Gerontological Nursing. I file away the certificates of conferences and in services on various Gerontological topics, and track the sessions I offer to my peers. Much of this revolves around the work I do with Alberta Health Services in my role as Manager on the Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network – a provincial team focused on enhancing care of older adults in various settings (e.g. reducing antipsychotic use in LTC, preventing delirium in acute care). Many national groups host webinars (live and archived) that qualify for Gerontological CL hours: CGNA Webinar sessions; BrainXchange; CaDeN, Baycrest, to name a few.

C.N.A. recognizes the importance of professional associations such as CGNA in supporting certification. Some of the 100 hours of CL required for recertification can be earned through participation in our association and more for volunteering in roles such as: holding a position with any of the many committees and boards that are part of CGNA: Local chapter activities, provincial associations, or nationally.

I am a strong supporter of the importance of the certification process. We have distributed letters to employers across Canada requesting that positions in Gerontological Nursing request a certification in our specialty, or at least indicate this credentialing as a preference.

I have been CGNA's representative for four years on the C.N.A. on the Certification Program Advisory Committee. During this time the exam writing moved to be 'on-line' with two writing windows/year. I participated in national discussions with representatives from other specialties on issues that impact all the certification exams. For instance, we determined at a minimum of 100 exam applications (new and renewal) are required to maintain viability of that exam. Gerontological Nursing has the largest number of certified nurses and continues to attract sufficient number of applicants to remain viable in the program. Some exams have seen a decline in the numbers applying to write and thus will be retired after this November writing period: gastroenterology, neuroscience, orthopaedic, perianesthesia and rehabilitation.

Over the past two years we have worked closely with C.N.A. to support the development of a second Gerontological Nursing exam for Licensed/Registered Practical Nurses. This fall Practical Nurses have the opportunity to demonstrate their competence in this area of nursing with their own exam. We helped recruit the many Practical Nurses who were involved in developing the exam blue print (based on CGNA's standards) and writing exam questions with YardStick (the company that is contracted to assist in the exam development for all specialties under the C.N.A. Certification Program). Our thanks to the many CGNA members who volunteered their time and talents to the development of the first certification exam in Canada for Practical Nurses. A plan for Registered Psychiatric Nurses (a category of registration seen mostly in Western Canada) to become certified in Gerontological Nursing is underway as a



collaboration between C.N.A. and CGNA. As many of the ‘knowledge’ questions on the two exams cover the same content areas, we decided that our CGNA study group would be open to both RNs and Practical Nurses who are preparing to write their respective exams. The differences between the two exams will be found in the questions involving the application of the knowledge which will consider the practices of the two professional nursing designations.

I have been honoured to represent CGNA at these national discussions and will continue to offer my support of this work in my role as Past-President. Certification is an excellent way to demonstrate your competence in this practice field regardless of your role: educator, administrator, researcher, clinician. If you are not yet certified I encourage you to consider becoming so!


Mollie Cole,

Past-President, CGNA

President Elect’s Message-

Writing the Gerontological Certification Exam-No Regrets!

By Elaine Campbell



The first group of gerontological nurses was certified by the CNA in 1999- I was a part of that group! At the time I had been a practicing RN for over 15 years and had recently taken on the role of nurse manager of a newly created provincial geriatric program. I was looking for a way to keep current with my knowledge and skills and expand my level of expertise in gerontological nursing. Along with several colleagues I took the nerve wracking step to apply and prepare for the certification exam. None of us knew what to expect or really how best to prepare. At that time there was a recommended reference text book but very little access to study groups or online resources. Four of us gathered together creating our own support group for weekly study and creating mock quizzes trying our best to prepare. The day came to write the exam ...I remember thinking this is expensive, success is not guaranteed, and this is not a requirement- why am I putting myself through this? We wrote the 3 hr multiple choice exam with nothing but pencils in hand and I remember thinking all these answers seem right or not right – how will I ever succeed-I was afraid of failure- there was no way of knowing really what the outcome would be. My colleagues and I left the room after completing the exam - feeling completely drained we comforted ourselves with a long walk and an ice cream treat. We all felt vulnerable and unsure but we also felt a sense of accomplishment and we each believed continuous learning in our area of specialty (geriatrics) was absolutely essential.

Since that day (I passed!) I have been a certified gerontological nurse and this fall I will be renewing that certification for the 4th time! I have been involved in continuous learning and professional development in many capacities, joined CGNA, obtained my masters of nursing, had career progression, taught and mentored gerontological nurses, chaired educational conferences, advocated for seniors, maintained my nursing competencies and practiced according to gerontological nursing standards. Certification and its process for renewal requires continuing education – it validates what I do know and it has been a motivator to make me a better gerontological nurse. I encourage you all to consider writing the certification exam, access the support available and put GNC(C) beside your name!

Elaine Campbell RN,MN GNC(C)

President Elect, CGNA

Words from CGNA Directors of Communication and Education

By Julie Rubel



It's an exciting time to be involved in CGNA communications, here's two reasons why:

1. CNA Certification Webinars & Inaugural PN Writing

We were excited to share via email and social media, news of our webinar series designed to prepare for the CNA Gerontological Nursing Certification Exam (GNC(c)). The series, which launched on September 5, will run Thursdays for 9 weeks (<https://cgna.net/> for details). If you've missed a webinar, not to worry, CGNA members can access archived webinars free of charge- <https://cgna.wildapricot.org/members>.

Those who follow CGNA on social media (Twitter:- @cgna_ca or Facebook- Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association (CGNA)) will have also heard of the work many CGNA members put in to building the inaugural CNA Certification Exam for PNs (LPNs/ RPNs in Ontario). We are so proud of the efforts of these members, and of the courage shown by the more than 60 PNs who have registered to write the exam so far. These PNs will be joined by nearly 90 RNs also writing this fall and the 78 RNs who wrote in May. It's clear there are many gerontological nurses across Canada who want to demonstrate their commitment to our specialty through stewardship of the knowledge and experiences that make our practice unique and rewarding

2.Federal Election 2019



By the time you read this newsletter, campaigning for the 2019 Federal election will be heating up. We know there are many issues that are important to you, both personally and professionally, and we encourage you to be informed of your options. To help, we offer this link to CNA's Election Platform (<https://elections.cna-aiic.ca/en>) which highlights four areas (caregiver support; a universal, single-payer Pharmacare program; technology-enabled virtual care beyond hospital walls; and climate change) with relevance to health and provides evidence-informed recommendations. We hope you find this resource helpful and, importantly, we hope you vote on October 21!

Finally, I wanted to briefly share my GNC(c) story with each of you who have successfully written/ renewed or are applying to write this fall (application deadline is September 30). Don't forget CGNA members can save 20%, <https://cgna.net/> for details! With 5 years of gerontological nursing experience under my belt and an abundance of passion for the specialty, I decided to write the exam in 2009. Like many others, I left the exam feeling uncertain and was legitimately relieved to hear I had passed! Since that time, I have proudly worn my CNA Certification pin as a symbol of my commitment to providing evidence-informed care and continuously striving to learn more. Through two renewals (2014 & 2019- those who follow me (@jrubel21) will have seen my recent tweet about this), I have learned more, much more, and I have met some outstanding gerontological nurses along the way! Cheers to each of you who "Care to Be the Best", may you be successful in your GNC(c) journey!

Julie Rubel, RN MScN GNC(c)

Communications Director, CGNA

Message from CGNA Education Director

By Lillian Hung



I am excited to work with nursing experts across the country to bring a series of nine webinars for supporting nurses (Registered Nurses and Practical Nurses) in preparation of the Gerontological Nursing Certification Exam. Beginning September 5, 2019 and running every Thursday, the webinars cover topics of age-related changes, delirium, depression, dementia, pain management, end of life care, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), acute infections, mental health and substance use, skin and wound care, chronic illnesses, sexuality, incontinence, frailty and fall prevention. The webinars include both content review and practice questions.

The cost of each webinar session is \$20 for CGNA members and \$30 for non-members. CGNA members receive free access to archived webinars, housed in the 'Members Only' section of the CGNA website. CGNA members are also entitled to a 20% discount for

writing the CNA certification exam and renewing certification. For more information, visit <https://cgna.net/studygroups.html>.

Mollie and I are also delighted to work with a graduate student, Tharexa Sribalan at Ryerson University, to study the impacts of the webinars/study group, participants' experiences, and lessons learned for future improvement. Please contact me at education@cgna.net if you are interested in participating in a focus group or interview to share your view. Nurses who have been involved or participated in any forms of a study group for writing the Gerontology Certification Exam are welcome to join the focus group or interview.

I look forward to hearing your perspective.

Lillian Hung RN PhD GNC (c)

Director Education, CGNA

On behalf of CGNA, we miss each of you writing the CNA certification exam this fall the best of luck!



Our successful 2019 CGNA Biennial Conference!

The 20th biennial conference was held in Calgary, Alberta, May 2nd – 4th 2019. Did you hear the echoing “YAHOO” over Calgary? That was the over 300 nurses attending the CGNA Biennial Conference experiencing unique Western hospitality. The Conference provided attendees with the opportunity to attend two of 6 pre-conference sessions; 144 poster and paper presentations, as well as 2 keynote speakers and the CGNA Annual General Meeting. CASN held a workshop on the Gerontological Competencies for graduating baccalaureate nurses and RNAO provided an update on the new edition of the best practice guidelines for the 3D’s. Thank you to the 13



sponsors and over 20 exhibitors. If you were unable to attend the May conference, here are a few highlights:

Two inspiring Keynote Speakers.

Dr. Bernice Downey told ‘A Nokomis Story: Finding and supporting a culturally relevant path of wellness for the Indigenous elder population.’

Dr. Jane Barratt spoke on ‘Doing What Matters’: looking at the need of older persons from an international perspective

Six Pre-Conference Workshops

- Appropriate Use of Antipsychotics in Long Term Care and beyond
- Licensed Practical Nurse Leadership in a Caring Environment
- Elder Friendly Care in Acute Care Settings
- Making Better Easier: Combining what matters to you with experience data to inform improvements in care
- interRAI: Myths, Realities and Facts to Inform Gerontological Nursing Practice
- Gerontological Competencies and Standards for Undergraduate Nurses and Nurses & Implications for the current RN-NCLEX

Posters and Oral presentations

The excellent quality of posters and oral presentations provided a robust sharing of clinical and research topics that were exceptional. We encourage all who presented via poster or oral presentation to consider submitting a manuscript to Perspectives, CGNA’s peer reviewed journal. You are already well on your way!

http://www.cgna.net/Perspectives_Journal.html

Also gratifying, we were able to raise funds for the Scholarship Fund from the Silent Auction at the Gala Dinner. Thank you to all who provided donations to the auction and to those who bid on the items. We hope you enjoyed kicking your shoes off and learning to line dance with The Chinook Country Line Dancers.

We look forward to planning the **21st Biennial conference for 2021 conference** which is to be held in Ontario – more news to share on that event in coming Newsletters!

Sincerely,

Kathleen Hunter at: kathleen.hunter@ualberta.ca



Cheryl Knight at: clknight@telusplanet.net

Diane Buchanan at: diane.buchanan@queensu.ca

**Announcing the Winner of the MIP Professional Development Award
for the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Specialty Practice Certification –
Gerontology**

In 2017 CGNA received notice that MIP was granting CGNA an sponsorship of an award to cover the cost associated with one application for a member who in 2017 wrote the certification exam for the initial time, or re-certified (by either rewriting the exam or through the Continuous Learning process). [MIP](#) provides textile/linen supplies for Acute and Long Term Care. They are committed to supporting Nurses become certified in their practice area.

We are pleased to announce this years’ recipient, Terri Woykiw (centre in photo) who will be renewing her certification.

Congratulations Terri and a thank you to MIP for your continued support!!!

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Happy Fall



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