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AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS

Reasons Why Critical Care Nurses Take or do not Take  
the CCRN Certification Examination in Critical Care Nursing

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## ABSTRACT

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As specialization in nursing continues, an increasing number of nurses are seeking certification in their specialty area of nursing practice. Critical care nursing is an area of specialty nursing practice. Since basic nursing programs do not prepare the professional nurse to practice in the critical care setting, preparation for critical care nursing is achieved through formal and informal continuing education in combination with clinical experience. Certification in critical care nursing is a means of continuing attainment of knowledge in critical care nursing.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify the reasons that critical care nurses give for taking or not taking the CCRN Certification Examination in critical care nursing, and to investigate whether or not the demographic characteristics of certified nurses differed significantly from those of noncertified nurses.

The 545 participants in Horizon's 88, a three-day critical care nursing conference held in Boston, Massachusetts in April 1989, received a questionnaire consisting of a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a modified Education Participation scale (EPS), Deterrents to Participation Scale (DPS), and a demographic information sheet. The modified EPS is a self-administered instrument eliciting the degree of influence that each of its 38 statements, possible reasons for certifying in critical care nursing, may have had on respondents' participation in the CCRN Certification Examination process. The modified DPS is a self-administered instrument eliciting the degree of influence that each of its 40 statements, possible reasons for not certifying in critical care nursing, may have had on respondents' lack of participation in the CCRN Certification Examination process. Both instruments utilized a 10-point Likert-type scale with options ranging from "no influence" to "very much influence." A total of 254 usable questionnaires were returned. The modified EPS and DPS responses were scored utilizing scales established in previous studies.

The reasons critical care nurses indicated were most influential for taking the certification examination were related to professional knowledge, professional advancement, and acquisition of credentials. No significant difference was found between the reasons given by certified nurses and those given by noncertified nurses. The reasons critical care nurses indicated were most influential for not taking the certification examination were related to incompatibility, subordinancy, and costliness. No significant difference was found between the reasons given for not certifying by certified nurses and those given by noncertified nurses. In relation to the demographic characteristics of the

certified and noncertified nurses, significant findings emerged in the characteristics of age, basic nursing preparation, and AACN chapter membership.