

## Foreign nurses and the shortage

**A** national nursing shortage, like no other, has gripped the United States. All across the nation, news agencies are focusing attention on the severe shortage of nurses to fill the plethora of vacant nursing positions, found especially

in long-term care facilities and urban hospitals. While the current shortage seems especially widespread across the country and even extending worldwide by most reports, it is by no means a new phenomenon.

Historically, nursing shortages in the U.S. have been a cyclic occurrence. And while critics may argue over the social, political and economic factors contributing to low nursing school enrollment, or the effect of managed health-care and an aging population on the nursing profession, one fact remains clear — hospitals and other health-care facilities hit hard by the shortage still need to find

nurses to fill those vacant and crucial positions. Many of those organizations will turn to foreign nurse recruitment as a solution to their problem.

In the late 1960s, the United States was deep in the throes of another national nursing shortage. During this time, the U.S. was experiencing a marked increase in the number of foreign-educated nurses immigrating to the U.S. to practice nursing. U.S. immigration officials had a difficult time identifying which nurses educated abroad, who were applying for occupational visas, met the requirements for licensure as registered nurses in the United States. The reality was that, on average, only 15-20% of foreign-educated nurses were passing the U.S. registered nurse licensure exam, now the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN® *examination*), on their first attempt.<sup>1</sup>

This led the Division of Nursing at the then Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to con-

tract for two outside studies regarding RN-licensure of foreign-educated nurses in the United States. The findings of these landmark studies on foreign nurse immigration conducted by the American Nurses Association (ANA) and Pace University, were discussed at a 1975 HEW conference attended by representatives of the ANA, the National League for

Nursing (NLN), U.S. Boards of Nursing, the American Hospital Association (AHA), the American Medical Association (AMA), the U.S. Department of

Labor (DOL), the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the New York State Education Department, among other organizations.

The outgrowth of the conference was that in 1977, ANA and NLN agreed to co-sponsor the establishment of a private, independent, non-profit organization as called for in one of the studies. The organization created was the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS).

CGFNS was established as a not-for-profit, immigration-neutral organization with a commitment to protect the American public by

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## Experts examine shortage

Leaders across the professional spectrum have joined together to address one of the most significant problems facing the healthcare field: the workforce shortage.

In March, the American Hospital Association's (AHA) Board of Trustees announced experts to serve on a blue-ribbon panel on this important issue. Peter W. Butler, president and CEO of Methodist Health Care System in Houston, was named chairman. AHA launched this effort aimed at affecting the immediate and long-term shortages of healthcare personnel.

The commission will develop and issue a final report on the workforce shortage at AHA's Annual Meeting in April 2002 — a blueprint of solutions that will also be shared outside the healthcare field with government leaders and a variety

of professional groups including educators, labor and technology leaders.

Butler stated, "This is one of the most significant issues facing every hospital. We've recruited leaders from within and outside healthcare to participate because it will take solutions involving all of us to head off this growing threat. The report developed by this commission over the next year will be the roadmap to guide us through the next generation."

Combined pressures — a shrinking workforce, an aging population, traditional work designs, changing social attitudes about work, financial concerns, increased demand and other stresses — have translated into a severe personnel deficit at our nation's healthcare facilities. The commission is charged with identifying strategies to increase recruitment, retention and development of qualified caregivers and support staff in hospitals.

Without sufficient personnel, America's hospitals will not be able to meet the growing healthcare needs of their communities. The shortages are not limited to any one occupation. Though the nursing shortage has received much attention, hospitals also face a decreasing applicant pool of caregivers in general, including pharmacists, technicians, technologists, therapists and other categories as well.

[Contributing Source: American Hospital Association]

## CGFNS requires licensure validations for all programs

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) changed the requirements of licensure validations for two of its services this year. The change affects the Credentials Evaluation Service (change effective January 1, 2001) and the Certification Program (change effective for applicants registering for the March 2001 CGFNS Qualifying Exam and all exams thereafter).

On the respective "effective" dates, CGFNS began requiring official validations of initial and current registrations/licenses. All validations of registrations/licenses must be

sent to CGFNS *directly* from the issuing authority.

This change will enable CGFNS to more effectively, accurately and reliably analyze the credentials of applicants.

CGFNS is committed to maintaining the highest standard in its screening,



evaluating and testing services that foreign-educated healthcare professionals worldwide have come to expect and depend upon.

## About this newsletter

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## APTA changes requirements

Physical therapists around the country have been heading back to school this year. That's because the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) has changed its requirements for accreditation and licensure as a physical therapist. Last year, APTA voted to no longer accredit Bachelor of Physical Therapy degree programs, effective January 1, 2002.

This decision elevates the educational requirement for licensure as a physical therapist to the master's degree level. In addition, the association also voted to raise the educational requirement again, so that by the year 2020, all physical therapists educated in the United States seeking licensure will be required to hold a Doctorate of Physical Therapy.

APTA's stance on the educational requirements of foreign-educated physical therapists is that it will be the responsibility of the individual State Boards of Physical Therapy to determine minimum state requirements for licensure of foreign-educated physical therapists.

# What you need to know about the CGFNS Qualifying Exam

**A**s Manager of Test Services, I've been asked to provide some additional information about the CGFNS Qualifying Exam. *Healthscope* felt that when applicants or prospective employees approach you with specific questions about how to go about expediting



their paperwork at CGFNS and the activities on exam day, it would be helpful for you to be able to supply them with some pointers. Here are a few things that will hopefully assist you with these kinds of questions:

Prepare to stay the whole day. While the exam itself lasts only 2-1/2 hours in the morning, and 1 hour 50 minutes in the afternoon, you must allow time for materials to be distributed, instructions to be read and lunch. One hour is usually given for lunch. If you plan ahead on staying the whole day, you will not be pressured to catch a train or a plane by a certain time.

Take a watch, or some other (quiet) timepiece. You'll want to know how much time is remaining in each section of the exam.

Do not take along too much baggage. It's just something else for you to worry about while you should be concentrating on the exam.

Get to the exam early. Make sure you leave yourself enough time for traffic, trains, or public transportation, and you will relieve yourself of unnecessary stress.

Dress comfortably.

Take along a couple of extra pencils (#2 lead ONLY!), the kind with erasers (not the mechanical kind) and a small manual pencil sharpener. Pencils are supplied by CGFNS, but it

never hurts to have enough sharpened and ready to use.

The proctoring staff is there to help you. If you have questions about what you're supposed to do, ask them. They will be glad to help.

Some applicants wear ear-plugs (like the kind given out on long flights) during the exam to keep out distracting noise. Just remember, headphones are not allowed, nor are "walkman" radios.

Cellular phones and beepers are not allowed to be turned on during the exami-

nation, nor are they allowed to be on your writing surface.

Make sure to read all of the information in the *Path to CGFNS Certification: Applicant Handbook* prior to the exam. There is a wealth of information in this booklet, and will answer

## 2002 Qualifying Exam Dates

**March 13, 2002**  
(Deadline: Dec. 12, 2001)

**July 10, 2002**  
(Deadline: April 10, 2002)

**November 13, 2002**  
(Deadline: August 14, 2002)

many of your questions ahead of time.

With any luck, this brief list of pointers will help appli-

cants have a more productive experience on exam day.

[By: Kurt Barkley, Manager of Test Services]

## CGFNS changes many of its service fees

**C**GFNS has changed the fees for its Certification Program and Credentials Evaluation Service as well as cancelled its discount for the Visa-Screen program, and eliminated some of its fees for services such as Verification of Certificate Status and Change of Name or Address.

CGFNS has been able to prevent raising any fees for its three services for the past four years. However, due to a cumulative 58% increase in operating costs since 1997, CGFNS is now forced to raise its current fees in order to continue providing the same high standard in its screening, evaluating and testing services that foreign-educated healthcare professionals worldwide have come to expect and depend upon.

The application fee for CGFNS' Certification Program will become \$295 U.S. dollars (USD) beginning with applicants applying for the November 2001 Qualifying Exam. However this price change also includes the cost of the highly popular *Official Study Guide for the CGFNS Qualifying Exam*. The Re-application fee for the Certification Program will raise to \$250 USD beginning with the November exam.

The Credentials Evaluation Service, which has three levels of reports, is instituting the following fee changes: the General Report will become \$155 USD; the Healthcare Profession & Science Course-by-Course Report will raise to \$225 USD; and the Full Education Course-by-Course Report will become \$265 USD.

Through its division the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHCP), CGFNS will no longer be able to offer the discount currently given to certain eligible nurses who are applying for VisaScreen; however, the fee for the VisaScreen program will remain the same.

CGFNS is also eliminating some of its fees for certain services in response to applicant feedback. The service fees that are being eliminated are: Verification of Certificate Status, Change of Name, Change of Address, and Change of Exam Date or Exam Location.

All of these fee changes became effective July 1, 2001 (except the Certification Program fees which are effective for anyone applying for the November 2001 Qualifying Exam and thereafter).

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ensuring that nurses educated in countries other than the United States are eligible and qualified to meet licensure and other practice requirements in the U.S.

The CGFNS Certification Program was created to serve as a predictor exam and evaluation process for foreign-educated nurses to more accurately forecast which nurses were likely to meet the requirements for licensure as registered nurses in the United States.

The Certification Program is designed specifically for first-level (RN), general nurses educated and/or licensed outside the United States who wish to assess their chances of passing the NCLEX-RN® examination and attaining licensure as a

registered nurse in this country. The program is comprised of three elements: a credentials review of the nurse's education, registration and licensure; the CGFNS Qualifying Exam of nursing knowledge; and an English language proficiency examination (the Test of English as a Foreign Language, TOEFL). After successfully completing all three parts of the Certification Program, an applicant is awarded a CGFNS Certificate.

Anyone with an interest in selecting candidates who have a high probability of success on the NCLEX-RN® examination will find the program highly beneficial. Since the introduction of the Certification Program, first-

time RN-licensure pass rates of foreign-educated nurses holding a CGFNS Certificate have shown a marked improvement — up from 15-20% prior to the program in the 1970s to 85-90% today.<sup>2</sup> Applicants are able to complete all three requirements of the program without having to obtain a visa and travel to the United States. This process saves applicants both time and money by providing them with the opportunity to earn a CGFNS Certificate in their home country before traveling to the U.S. to take the NCLEX-RN® examination.

Throughout its history, CGFNS has demonstrated its dedication to excellence and quality in the healthcare arena. Today, CGFNS is one of the world's foremost

authorities on education, registration and licensure of nurses and other healthcare professionals around the globe. Its commitment to protecting the American public, as well as fostering equitable treatment of foreign-educated healthcare professionals who come to practice in the U.S. remains undiminished, and CGFNS continues to provide responsible leadership in the delivery of relevant services to the global nursing and healthcare community.

<sup>1</sup> Survey of Foreign Nurse Graduates. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, DHEW Publication No. (HRA) 76-13, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> 1999-2000 Report on the CGFNS Validity Study. The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools, 2000.

**Mark  
your calendar**

CGFNS will be exhibiting at the following conferences. If you will be attending any of these conferences, please stop by the CGFNS booth. We would love to see you there.

**July 18-21**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
HEALTH CARE RECRUITMENT  
Albuquerque, NM

**September 13-15**  
CLEAR: COUNCIL ON LICENSURE,  
ENFORCEMENT AND REGULATION,  
2001 ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
San Antonio, TX

**November 10-14**  
SIGMA THETA TAU  
INTERNATIONAL, 36TH BIENNIAL  
CONVENTION  
Indianapolis, IN



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