

## **PICCs- "Certification" or Competency Assessment?**

### **Question:**

I have attended a PICC education course and have a certificate of attendance. What else is required before I am "certified" to place PICCs. Since I do not want to be involved with the actual infusion of drugs, blood, or nutrition, the certification in infusion therapy (CRNI) is much more than what I need.

### **Answer:**

The word "certify" or "certification" is a very misused and misunderstood term in healthcare, especially nursing. Certification is applied exclusively to national certification exams offered by the professional organizations such as ONS, INS, or AACN. These certifications indicate that one has mastered the content identified by those groups. At the present time, NAVAN does not offer a similar certification limited to PICC insertion or vascular access only. National certifications cover a wide scope of knowledge within that specialty and are not oriented to a specific task, such as PICC insertion.

Employers use the term "certification" to indicate that someone is competent and qualified to perform a certain task. The JCAHO now uses the term "competency assessment" for this process.

For PICC insertion, this complete process would include:

1. Meeting criteria established by the employer about skills and experience required to begin the learning process on a particular task. Examples include a policy requiring a specific number of years with venipuncture and CVC management experience or a high percent of success with venipuncture procedures.
2. Attend a continuing education course to learn all the information necessary. This usually includes a lab practicum component. The NAVAN PICC Course Approval Program recommends that anatomical models be used instead of healthy volunteers because the risk to the volunteer is too great.
3. Perform the task, under supervision, for the required number of times. For PICC insertion, this usually ranges from 3 to 5 supervised successful insertions.
4. Subsequent annual competency assessment processes are dependent upon the outcomes of the PICC insertions performed.

This process indicates that the complete "certification" comes from the employer. A continuing education course alone is not sufficient for the entire process, although many employers require the professional to have a "certificate of attendance" from an education course. Successful clinical experience is required. Ongoing competency requires an assessment of clinical outcomes and a periodic re-assessment based on those outcomes.