

Destination Certification

Cultivating Specialty Expertise through Medical-Surgical Nurse Certification

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Introduction

The Future of Nursing report by the 2010 Institutes of Medicine includes recommendations for health care organizations to provide the support and necessary resources for nurses to engage in continued learning to ensure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to care for diverse patient populations. Specialty certification is one method to achieve this recommendation. Studies reveal that certified nurses demonstrate expert knowledge and proficient skill competencies, which is associated with higher rates of patient satisfaction and lower rates of healthcare-associated errors. Campaigns launched to expand the number of certified nurses within an organization are rewarded with a positive impact on patient care outcomes.

Significance

In the United States, there are 2.6 million employed nurses. Over half of those, 58%, work on a medical-surgical unit. In accordance with these statistics, medical-surgical nurses comprise more than half of the nurses practicing within our multi-hospital network. Therefore, promoting medical-surgical certification could significantly enhance the care quality provided to our patients while also assisting to meet organizational goals such as Magnet Re-Designation and national benchmarking for quality and service.

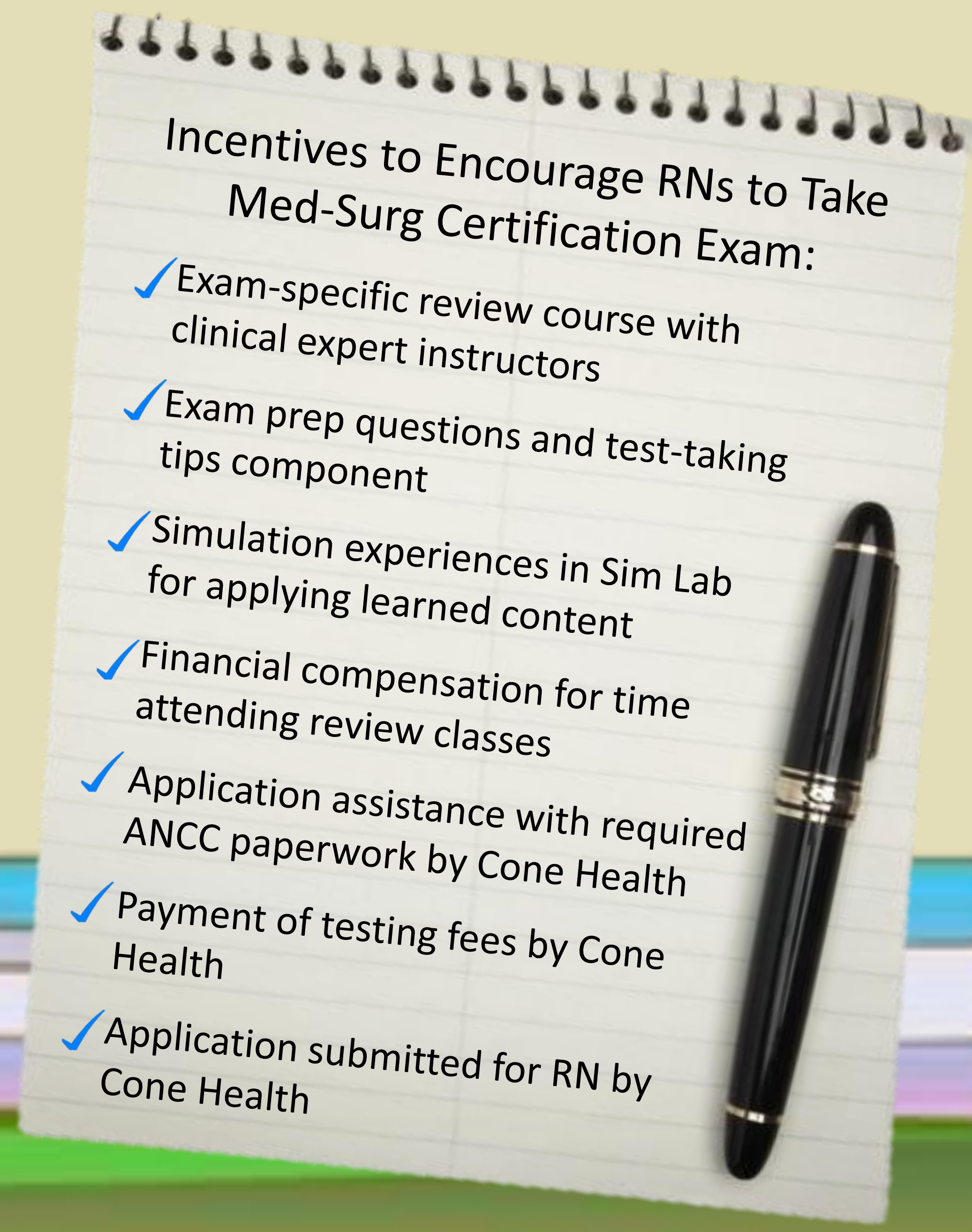


Purpose

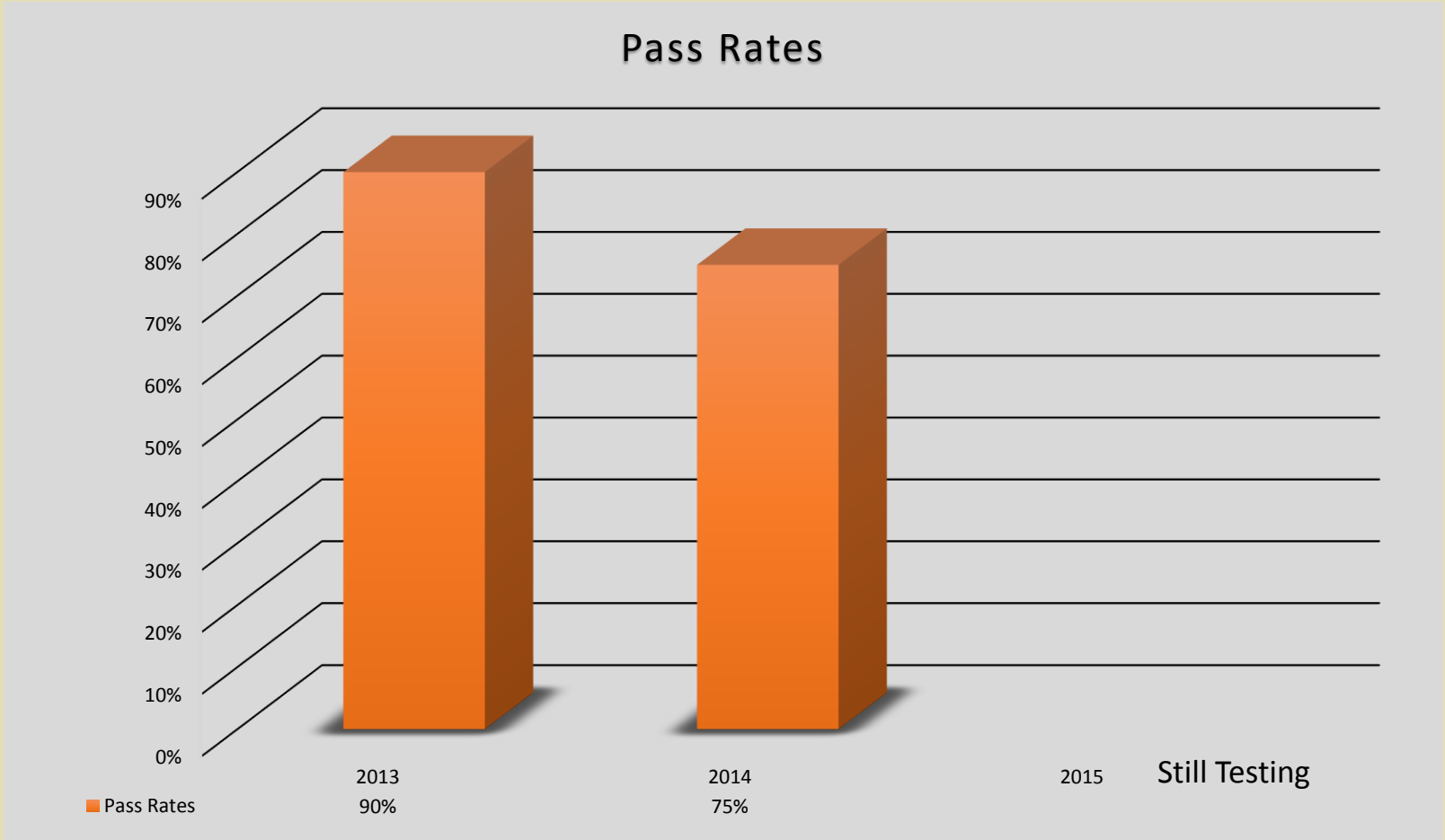
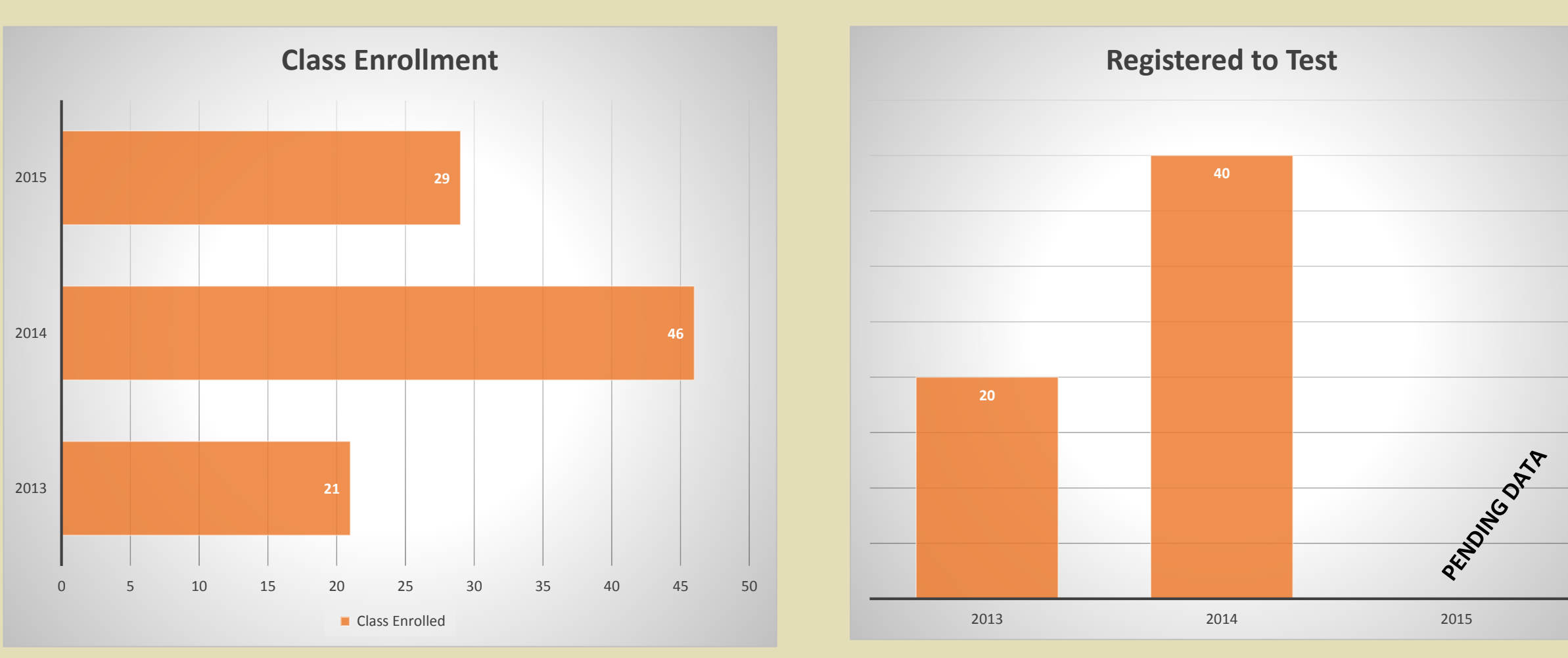
1. Describe the infrastructure of a program designed to prepare nurses to take the medical-surgical certification exam.
2. Discuss strategies that increase the number of nurses who take a certification exam and successfully pass.

Strategy and Implementation

Realizing the need to increase the number of certified medical-surgical nurses within our organization, a review course and an exam application process was developed to appeal to the busy bedside nurse. Incentives were provided to encourage nurses to not only participate in the review course, but to also apply and take the exam, which historically were barriers to successful certification. Because of the financial incentives offered, participants were expected to sign a contract of commitment, attend all classes, submit all required paperwork, and take the examination within the specified time period to be eligible.

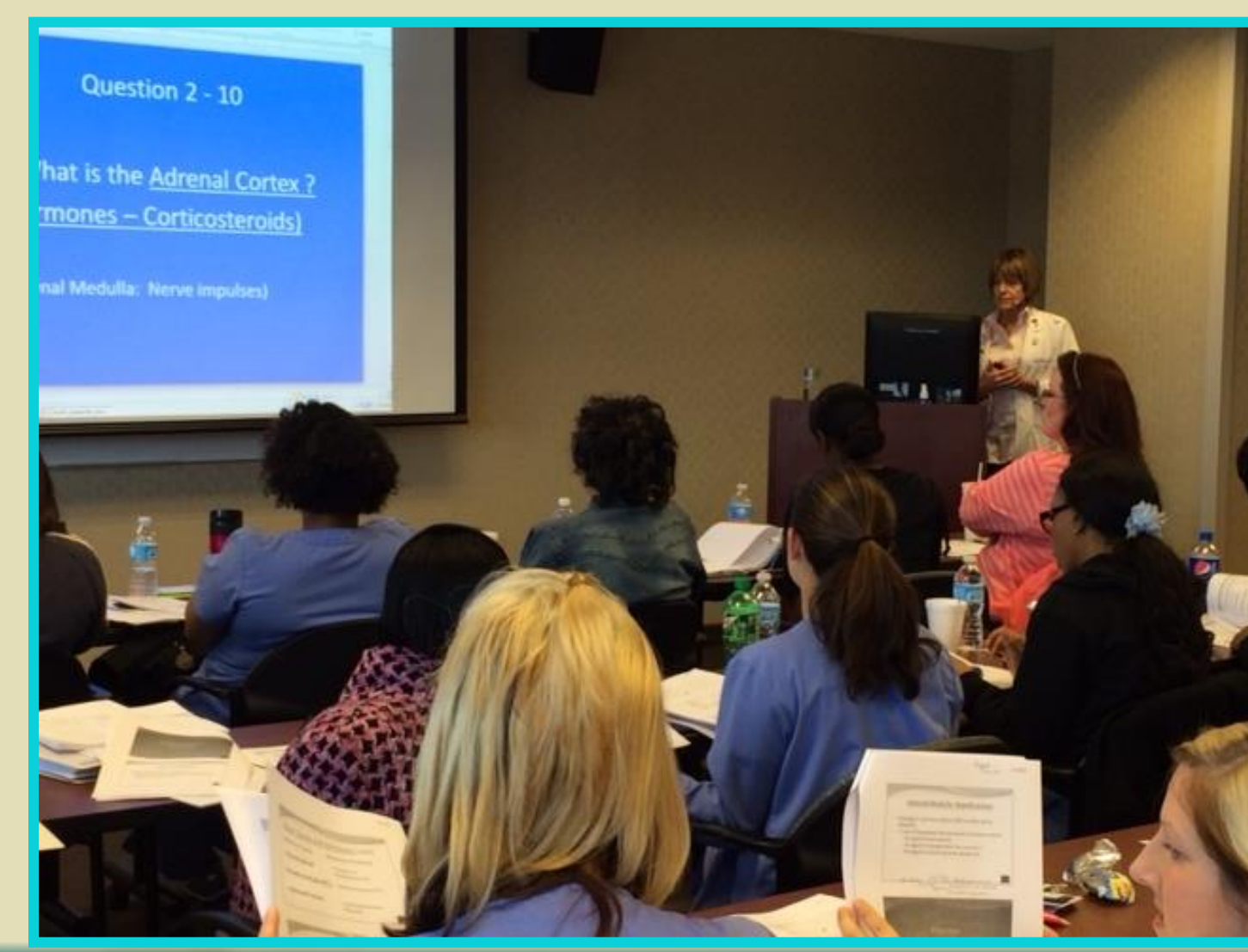


Results



Nurse participation in the optional simulation component.

- 15 Didactic presentations
- 14 Instructors
- 3 Coordinators



Nursing Implications/Discussion

Many healthcare organizations see the value in cultivating expert nurses through certification. Exam preparation support, financial resources, and celebrating achievement have proven to be the keys to our success. This data correlates with our successful quality patient outcomes, nationally recognized bench marking and a third consecutive Magnet Re-designation for five of our hospitals!

Over recent years, this healthcare organization has seen a consistent, gradual increase in medical-surgical nurses seeking certification status. Incidentally, many of the class participants are new staff nurses that initiated steps towards certification as soon as they became eligible to test.

Since initiation of this journey to increase certified medical-surgical nurses, we have achieved positive outcomes. To date, we have achieved an overall 80% pass rate. 2015 class participants have begun testing—presently at a 36% pass rate.

Anecdotally, due to the medical complexity of hospitalized patients and the expert knowledge required to competently provide their care, nurses are often choosing to become certified in specialties associated with specific patient populations rather than the generalizable medical-surgical certification. Because of this, the developers of this program have begun to focus on nurses practicing on units that primarily care for general medical and surgical patients and to encourage them to see their practice as a specialty, too!

References

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