CCHN(C) certification
Its influence on nursing, employers, and clients

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Acknowledgements
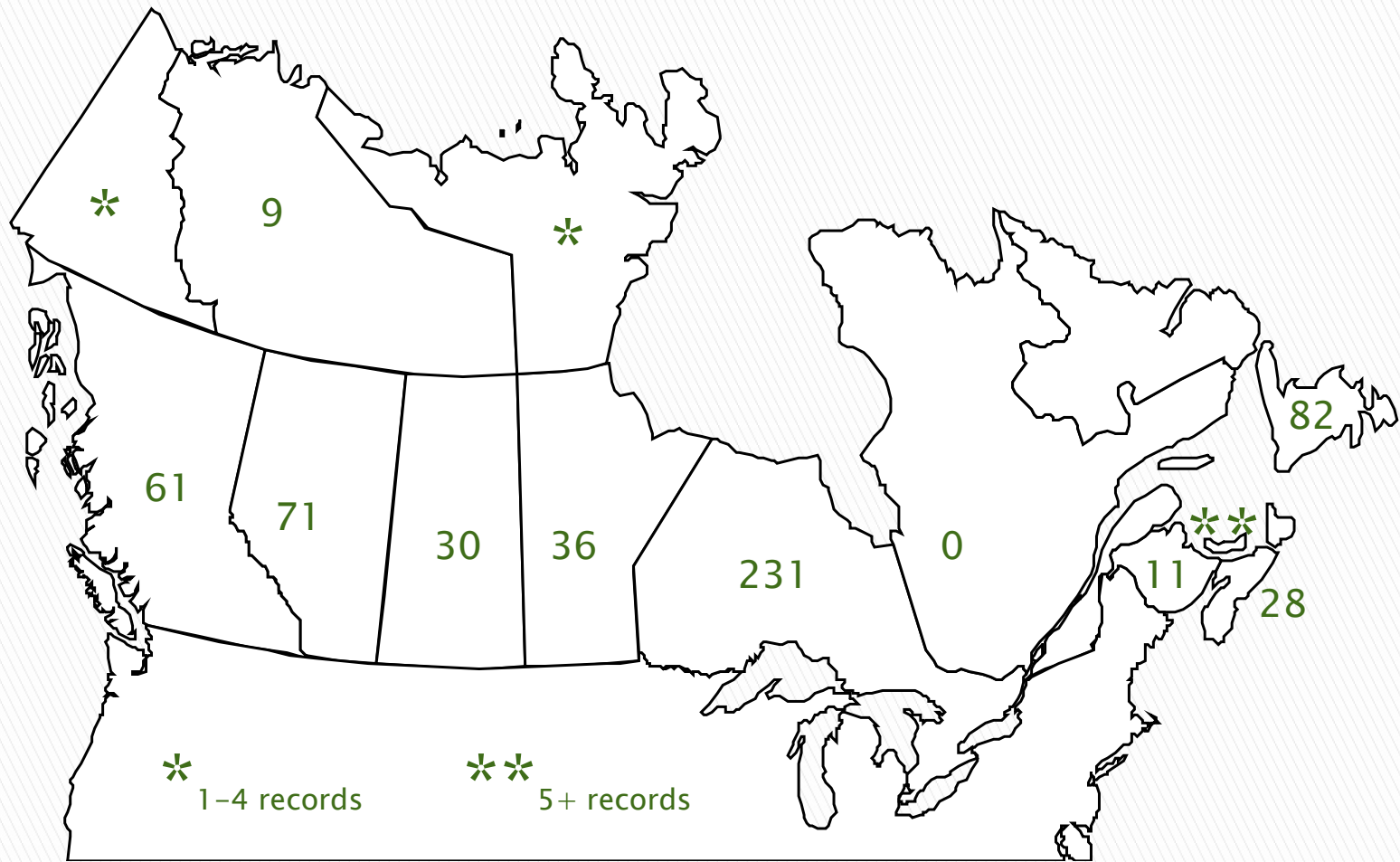
‣ This study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of both the University of Calgary and Dalhousie University.

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‣ The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the PHAC or CHNC.

Presentation outline

- Background
- Research objectives
- Methods
- Results
  - Influences on community health nursing practice
  - Influences of CCHN(C) on employing agencies
  - Influences of CCHN(C) on clients
  - Barriers and facilitators to certification and renewal
- Conclusions and recommendations

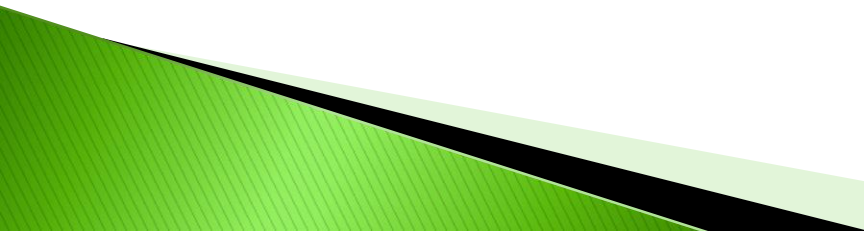# Background

- Certification in community health nursing (CCHN(C)) was launched by CNA in 2006.

- The first cohort is eligible to renew its CCHN(C) credential in 2011.

- Community health certification has experienced the highest growth of all CNA specialties.

- There are now 566 CCHN(C) certified nurses in Canada (CNA, 2010)

Distribution of CCHN(C) nurses in Canada 2010

Purpose of this research

▸ Identify the influences of CNA's community health nursing certification on nursing practice;

▸ Identify the influences of CNA's community health nursing certification on employing agencies; and

▸ Identify organizational facilitators and barriers for CCHN(C) certification and renewal.

Research methods

- Surveys (3)
  - Nurses in the first cohort (n=48)
  - CHNC members and other certified nurses (n=177)
  - Employers (n=31)
- Focus groups (5, n=33)
- Individual interviews (n=14)
- Five phases for data collection over 3 months in 2010

Results: Influences on CHN practice
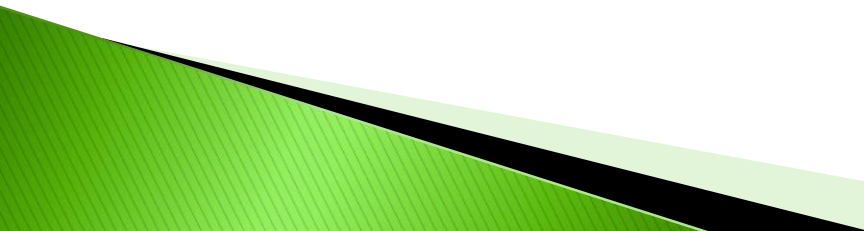
- ❑ Work to a more full scope of practice
- ❑ Are more up-to-date in their knowledge
- ❑ Satisfy clients with the service provided
- ❑ Are more credible in interprofessional /multidisciplinary contexts
- ❑ Apply and talk about research in practice decisions
- ❑ Are better prepared for positions of added responsibility
- ❑ Are more likely to promote certification among colleagues

"Certification is <u>not</u> about gathering letters after your name – it's a signal of excellence."

"It is a lens or framework to mobilize practice in the community, whether with individuals, families or community partners."

Results: Influences on CHN practice

- Nurses with CCHN(C) report:
  - Improved job satisfaction
  - Peer recognition of advanced status
  - Recognition of community health expertise

- They do not believe that
  - Clients recognise their expertise
  - They have different work assignments than non-certified colleagues
  - They have more autonomy in practice

"I am changed on the inside. You can't see it from the outside looking in. I just <u>know</u> I think differently and I look at things differently now."

"Before, I couldn't articulate what I was doing and why"

Results: Influences on employing agencies

▶ Employers
  ◦ Provided recognition for nurses that became certified
  ◦ Provided support for certification
  ◦ Acted to reduce or eliminate barriers to certification

▶ Employers did <u>not</u>
  ◦ Amend job descriptions, performance appraisal tools, hiring criteria, pay scales
  ◦ Offer more CE opportunities, incentives to maintain certification
  ◦ Inform the public re: specialist nurses on staff

"Certification has influenced the whole development of how we do our business."

"Certified nurses are helping us to make changes"

Results: Influences on clients

- Difficult to measure by research methods used in this study

- Anecdotal evidence of changed practice

- Powerful narratives of impact on clients

- Universal support for research to inform indicators for quality of nursing service and impact on clients

Certification hasn't changed the fundamental nature of practice, but

"Maybe I ask more questions when I am doing care – questions about what's going on outside of their health problem and the person/family."

Results: Barriers to certification and renewal

- Organizational barriers include:
  - Lack of support for examination preparation
  - Inability to increase compensation for certified nurses
  - Lack of recognition for achievement of CCHN(C)
  - Lack of on-site continuing education
  - Professional development on nurses' personal time
  - Lack of mentors in the organization
  - Lack of on-site, easily accessed reference materials

Results: Facilitators for certification & renewal

▸ Organizational facilitators include:
  ◦ Reimbursement for exam costs
  ◦ Work time for exam preparation
  ◦ Provision of mentors
  ◦ On-site reference materials & in-service education
  ◦ Keeping CCHN Standards of Practice in mind for continuing education and other decisions
  ◦ Promotion of certification as a benefit to the organization and clients
  ◦ Recognition and celebration of achievements

Value of certification: Extrinsic

▸ Why do CHNs seek certification?

- Increased marketability

- Peer recognition of advanced status

- External recognition of advanced status

- Recognition of advanced status from health professionals and stakeholders

- Recognition of community health expertise

Value of certification: Intrinsic

- Certified CHNs reported:
  - Improved job satisfaction
  - Enhanced feelings of personal accomplishment
  - Validation of specialized knowledge
  - Attainment of a practice standard or competency
  - Evidence of professional commitment
  - Acceptance of professional challenges

- However, they did <u>not</u> report
  - Different job assignments than non-certified CHNs
  - Greater job autonomy than non-certified colleagues

Conclusions

- Cannot measure the impacts on service quality or client safety or other client outcomes without further research
- The impact of CCHN(C) on practice is positive
- The impact of CCHN(C) on organizations is developing more slowly
- There is substantial extrinsic and intrinsic value of certifications to CHNs across Canada

"It's truly the first certification that is about us because community health is so eclectic and this one is truly about us and there is a huge sense of pride in this."

Recommendations

- Promote a broad definition of community health nursing
- Improve the profile of CCHN(C) certification among CHNs, employers and educators
- Recognise and reward CHNs with CCHN(C)
- Support research on the effects and impacts of CCHN(C) on community health nursing and client outcomes
- CNA and CHNC to ensure balance, content, currency and appropriateness of the exam

For further information

- The complete report is available from the Community Health Nurses of Canada (CHNC):

www.chnc.ca