

**Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing  
Proposed New Entry-to-Practice Nursing Exam: Position Statement  
December 20, 2011**

The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) and its members do not support a recent decision by Canada's nursing regulatory bodies to replace the traditional Canadian entry-to-practice exam with an exam jointly developed with an American organization, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. The proposed exam raises real concerns about the potential negative impact on Canadian nursing education.

- The current American entry-to-practice nursing exam, the NCLEX is based on an empirical analysis of practice while the current Canadian exam is **competency-based**. CASN members (all nursing schools) help define and update the competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes) through a national, collaborative process led by the Canadian Nurses Association. This ensures that, each year, the exam reflects the needs of our Canadian health care system.
- The entry-to-practice requirement in Canada is a **baccalaureate degree**, but in the U.S. this is not the case with the result that the expectations of new graduates are not at the same level as in Canada. We are concerned that the exam may reflect a lower and more limited common denominator of nursing practice.
- The Canadian exam is offered in **both official languages** involving a portion of the item writing in French which is then translated into English; it is not clear whether the proposed exam will reflect French culture and language.
- The current exam reflects content featured in Canadian textbooks while, understandably, the current American exam reflects that country's culture and health system, both of which differ significantly from Canada. How much Canadian content will be featured in the joint exam and **how much influence will Canadian regulatory bodies** have in developing the exam? There are 60 American regulatory nursing organizations involved in that discussion and only ten in Canada; the power is unbalanced.
- The American government has access to personal information held by American companies. We are concerned that **Canadian nurses' private information** will be available to American authorities. CASN would like more information from the regulatory bodies about the implications of the U.S. Patriot Act and the privacy of Canadian nursing students' data.
- CASN and its members are nursing education experts with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the creation of nursing exams and their link to curriculum, and thus to practice. It is disturbing that **nursing schools were not consulted** during this process. Changing what is tested means changing what is taught, and based on current information CASN is deeply concerned that future Canadian nurses will simply not be as qualified as they are now.

The focus of CASN and its members is to ensure the excellence of Canadian nursing education because excellent nursing education has a positive impact on patient safety. The proposed exam risks reducing the quality of education of Canadian nurses and will not ensure that nurses entering the Canadian workforce are safe to practice within the context of the Canadian health care system.

CASN and nursing school deans ask that **all negotiations with National Council of State Boards of Nursing be put on hold** until a collaborative framework involving the regulatory bodies and CASN has been established.

**Involve the educators in this education issue.**