



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVING THE GLOBAL NURSING AND HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY



Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools



International Commission on Healthcare Professionals

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A Global Resource

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools is a not-for-profit, immigration neutral, internationally recognized authority on the education, registration and licensure of nurses and other healthcare professionals worldwide.

Message from the President



Phyllis Beck Kritek
PhD, RN, FAAN
President

It is a pleasure to share with our many constituencies the outcomes of a year of hard work and evolving partnerships, both nationally and internationally. Our reflective celebration of our 25th anniversary last year provided us with enhanced clarity of vision and purpose, enabling us to articulate an ever-expanding story of the CGFNS as a global resource.

While our history springs from national concerns, our dual mission of protection of the public and attention to the well-being of immigrating nurses has made ours an international voice and presence. Nursing communities around the world, and more recently, health professional communities around the world, recognize the commission as a standard bearer of quality, a force committed to safe and effective health care through articulating and upholding United States licensure and practice requirements. This year we have learned more explicitly that doing our job well “at home” makes a difference for nurses around the world: if we uphold our standards, global standards are strengthened.

Understanding our role as a global resource has framed the many activities described in this report. While other health care professional groups seek to create an international presence, we are one. While other health care professionals seek to export United States standards, we continue to create bridges of communication and collaboration. We represent many national views, but also continuously negotiate and mediate the differences among regions, nations, and cultures. For us, globalization is not a trend, but a given. We are established participants in this given, and it has altered our work and our outcomes.

Technology is one of the key ingredients in globalization, and our increased investments in a state of the art information system have begun to pay off. The discomfort of implementation has concluded in an improved linkage with our many constituencies. We will continue to strengthen this capacity as new needs emerge.

Our context is global and thus our decisions as a board are shaped by our understanding of the global community. The many global and regional shifts and changes during this year have touched us directly: wars and civil unrest, diseases such as AIDS and SARS, subsequent diminished travel security serve as useful examples. In confronting these “dangers” we have become more certain of our international presence, e.g. negotiating a new test site in China “around” the constraints created by a WHO SARS responsive quarantine.

We are both respectful and proud of our global presence, its import and impact. This annual report provides you with a roadmap through our travels throughout the world, showing you along the way how we make a difference. We hope you enjoy the journey.



CANADA

- Canada has become a cultural mosaic in which immigrant groups have been able to retain much of their ethnic culture. The etiquette of business people may reflect their ethnic background.
- The British and French heritage, plus the influence of the United States, has led to broad diversity of artistic endeavors in Canada. The major metropolitan centers have provided several focal points for artistic activity stimulated by a rapidly urbanizing society.
- Canada has a diversity of joint federal-provincial and local programs to meet the health and social needs of its people.
- Most Canadians live in the country's southernmost area, within 300 miles of the U.S. border
- In the year 2003, one hundred twenty-two nurses took the CGFNS Qualifying Examination and one hundred sixty-two VisaScreen™ Certificates were issued to registered nurses.

Message from the CEO



Barbara L. Nichols
DHL, MS, RN, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer

I am pleased to present CGFNS' 2003 Annual Report, which chronicles the Commission's unmatched knowledge and expertise in national and international credentialing of healthcare professionals.

As geographic boundaries shrink and disappear, the need for standard-setting systems that create and validate healthcare professionals' qualifications has become paramount - globally and nationally. Several factors have fueled interest in the development of global standards for healthcare professionals. The worldwide nursing shortage, trade and service agreements that structure transnational migratory patterns, and new mechanisms for delivering services have changed the face of healthcare practice. We are proud to be a vital presence in the international arena helping to develop the highest possible standards for the global workforce.

For more than 25 years, the Commission has committed itself to protecting the United States public by ensuring that internationally educated nurses and other healthcare professionals who wish to practice in the U.S. are eligible and qualified to meet licensure and practice requirements. We have verified the credentials of more than 300,000 foreign-educated nurses and, more recently, tens of

thousands of physical therapists and medical technologists. Our resulting grasp of international educational, regulatory, cultural, emigration, and immigration issues sets us apart.

We have strengthened our traditional role in professional credentialing and certification through evolving collaborative partnerships and alliances. We have made significant gains in building diverse relationships within the global healthcare community - acknowledging and embracing our differences while leveraging our shared experiences and beliefs.

We continue to work diligently to make our programs and services more efficient and effective. Our research capabilities have enabled us to inform the public and professionals about a wide range of healthcare related issues, from the common characteristics of migrating nurses to specific information about testing and educational processes in the U.S. and other countries. We have opened new test sites in India and China, making our qualifying exam available to nurses on six continents in 44 countries, in rural and urban communities.

Ongoing work on the CGFNS Web site reflects our dedication to addressing applicant concerns for accessibility. The site

provides immediate access to data about exam dates, exam centers, fee schedules, and immigration requirements, and outlines all of the Commission's programs and services. In addition, we conduct on-line surveys that enable our clients to provide valuable feedback to help us further improve our performance. In an era of increased competition and expanding markets, CGFNS will continue to make the most of information technology as a tool to provide meaningful information and effective services.

We have devoted a great deal of strategic thinking and creative energy to optimizing our key functions. We also have built on our core abilities by strengthening our role in healthcare professional credentialing and certification, expanding our role as a partner in policy and standards development, and positioning CGFNS as an expert on international education, labor markets, and migration of healthcare professionals.

As this report indicates, our quest for quality and relevance continues. We welcome the challenge and look forward to fulfilling our commitment in new ways.



CHINA

- The Chinese boast the world's oldest continuous civilization, with more than 4,000 years of recorded history. Beijing (old Peking) has been the capital of China for over 800 years and is the country's political, economic, and cultural hub.
- Although spoken Chinese has many dialects there is one common written language. Many Chinese movies have Chinese subtitles, so that Cantonese-speaking Chinese audiences can understand the Mandarin-speaking actors.
- The family, school, work unit, and local community are the basic social structures that give stability to one's life. There is a strong commitment to the extended family.
- Stamp collecting is a big hobby in China.
- CGFNS held the first Qualifying Exam for registered nurses in mainland China in November of 2003. 190 nurses took the exam at that time.

For experience, knowledge, and action

Long and fruitful experience in the global arena uniquely qualifies CGFNS to identify and understand the nuances of the global healthcare community. Our singular position enables us to influence decisions in the best interests of the public and internationally educated healthcare professionals.

Dealing with Consequences

In 2002-2003, CGFNS continued to serve its pivotal role as an advocate for knowledge and fairness in a world fraught with uncertainty. Our efforts to enhance the global healthcare community – while protecting national public interests – remained strong, despite heightened international conflict, broad economic stress, and a crippling worldwide shortage of healthcare professionals, most particularly nurses.

Nurses and aspiring nurses in other countries see great opportunity for personal and professional advancement in the heavily promoted U.S. market. They continue to migrate in large numbers despite the increased interest of federal and state agencies in their backgrounds and qualifications. This movement across cultures challenges national communities and the national and international bodies that serve them.

While duplicating time-honored solutions to other shortages in the U.S., growing nursing migration (with its increased governmental involvement) complicates the business of evaluating qualifications. Regulatory, legislative, educational, and other bodies must evolve continually to protect the public. In addition, heavy recruitment of internationally educated nurses requires constant vigilance to ensure that they are protected from unscrupulous interests.

Migration also presents a double edge in those countries educating nurses and other healthcare professionals for the global market. Increased interest in the nursing profession helps to elevate national educational and practice standards. This improves healthcare at home and raises the standard of living for new segments of the population. At the same time, it makes it easier for professionals to leave home, depriving local communities of valuable assets.

Raising the Bar

CGFNS sees a strong ongoing interest in the U.S. healthcare market among internationally educated professionals, even in the wake of heightened domestic security concerns. Many potential emigrants have already weathered such uncertainties at home; promised opportunities naturally dominate their decisions to move.

While the level of migration into the U.S. remains relatively unchanged, the interest of federal, state, and local governmental agencies in the migration process has grown significantly. Of paramount concern: the integrity of procedures for screening healthcare professionals and for maintaining the security of examinations and other qualifying processes in other countries.

Because of its extensive experience, CGFNS has elevated its already significant status as a valued partner. In 2003, we worked closely with the Bureau for Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS), formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), on a number of topics related to Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.

CGFNS successfully promoted the use of scores from the Test of English in International Communication (TOEIC) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for its Certification and/or VisaScreen programs, in addition to previously accepted Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of Written English (TWE), and Test of Spoken English (TSE) scores. Expanding these options increases access and availability for applicants and, in turn, expedites certification and screening processes.

In addition, CGFNS now performs *VisaScreen™* credentials assessments for those nurses seeking to enter the U.S. on a temporary visa status, in addition to those wishing to obtain permanent occupational visas. This effort includes Canadian nurses entering the U.S. under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

CGFNS also continues to evaluate state legislative and regulatory proposals for changes to licensure requirements for healthcare professionals educated outside of the state or country. We have begun working with nursing regulatory and education bodies in the Caribbean to assess educational curriculum and English language proficiency preparation in regional nursing programs. With increasing nursing migration from Eastern Europe and former Soviet countries, CGFNS has begun to evaluate the need for testing centers in this geographic area as well.

Deeper involvement at this level furthers public confidence that internationally educated healthcare workers are who and what they say they are, and assures providers and patients of consistent educational and practice standards.



PHILIPPINES

- Foreigners are honored in the Philippines by being invited to family events: weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, and so on.
- The Philippines is comprised of 7,107 islands stretching 1,839 kilometers. The archipelago's biggest island is Luzon.
- Thirteen thousand, one hundred fifty-one registered nurses took the CGFNS Qualifying exam in 2003 and three thousand nine hundred twelve *VisaScreen™* Certificates were issued. One hundred and two *VisaScreen™* Certificates were issued to physical therapists.

For evaluation, education, and protection

As a primary resource for evaluating the credentials and qualifications of healthcare professionals around the world, CGFNS reflects evolving realities while maintaining sharp focus on its mandate. Our core programs expand in order to ensure public protection in a changing world.

Reaching Out

In 2003, CGFNS added three new test locations for its Certification Program Qualifying Exam: Beijing, China, and Cochin and New Delhi, India. CGFNS also reopened its Mexico City exam center and initiated a second center in Monterrey, Mexico. CGFNS further added an additional exam date for seven other test sites around the world to accommodate increased interest in the Qualifying Exam, and will determine whether to expand testing opportunities from three to four on a permanent basis. Interest in the Certification Program continues to grow by leaps and bounds. The number of applications doubled from 1999-2000 and has quadrupled overall since 1999.

Interest in the Credential Evaluation Service also shows remarkable growth, with the number of applications increasing from 1999-2002.

Final provisions of Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 have been published. CGFNS anticipates an exponential increase in the number of *VisaScreen™* credentials assessments it will perform, because the new regulations apply to those seeking temporary visa status as well as those seeking permanent visa status. Even without these changes in place, the number of applications for this service increased one-and-one-half times from 2000 to 2002.

The Credentials Verification Service of New York State, custom-designed and implemented by CGFNS in early 2001, has completed more than 10,000 applications for state licensure of nurses, occupational therapists, and physical therapists - a much higher level of activity than anticipated. The service has begun to work more closely

with nursing councils and other regulatory agencies inside and outside of the U.S. to clarify and communicate the differences between New York's requirements and other state programs.

Finally, in 2002, CGFNS' International Consultants of Delaware (ICD) division received approval from 20 state certified public accountancy boards to serve as an evaluation agency. ICD further received approval to perform *VisaScreen™* credentials assessments for the Florida Board of Physical Therapy in 2003. Altogether, more than 300 agencies and state boards now accept ICD as a credentials evaluator. The division will continue reaching into new professional areas and expanding its primary business of evaluating the credentials of physical therapists.



INDIA

- The Indian subcontinent, the great landmass of South Asia, is the home of one of the world's oldest and most advanced civilizations.
- India's population is some 890 million people, with one-sixth of the world's population calling it home.
- Since early times the Indian subcontinent appears to have provided an attractive habitat for human occupation. Toward the south it is sheltered by wide expanses of ocean, while to the north it is protected by the massive Himalayan ranges.
- CGFNS opened three new test sites in India in 2002-2003. A total of six thousand fifty-six nurses took the CGFNS Qualifying Exam in 2003.

For information, access, and opportunity

The needs of healthcare professionals around the world transcend traditional boundaries of time, place, and culture. CGFNS has made dramatic strides in providing meaningful support to those seeking to elevate themselves, their peers, and their professions.

Spreading Information

Early in 2003, CGFNS implemented a Web-based system that integrates the functionality of four formerly discrete information systems with our new and improved telephone voice response system. This integrated approach dramatically improves internal and external access to information.

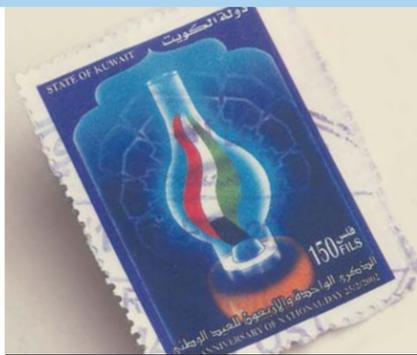
The system enables applicants to apply online, check the status of their applications, make changes to their accounts, and pay for products and other activities - 24 hours a day, seven days a week – a critical benefit for applicants spread across six continents and most time zones. CGFNS began posting roster lists for its Qualifying Exam on the website in 2003, making it possible for applicants to determine whether they are on the roster.

Since the new technology inception, more than 28,000 applicants have created user IDs in the external segment of the system and have accessed it more than 2,800 times to place orders or check application status.

The new system also has dramatically improved internal performance by increasing system security and efficiency. We continue to realize significant workflow and process improvements. CGFNS' information-technology strategy focuses on continuing evolution as business needs require. We expect valuable input from focus groups in the future as we seek to align the system with international expectations.

In mid-2003, CGFNS began shipping the fifth edition of its Official Study Guide. The new guide features four practice tests with more than 1,000 test questions and rationales, and an accompanying CD with special bonus material of three additional practice tests. The guide also includes information on the design, administration, and scoring of the Qualifying Exam, and clear, practical advice for taking multiple-choice exams such as the qualifying and NCLEX-RN™ exams.

Later in the year, we launched a new practical resource series, premiering with “English for Healthcare Professionals,” a practice set that focuses on healthcare jargon and language. The series, available in CD or audio cassette tape, enables internationally educated professionals to exercise practical application of the English language. Each set includes a transcription booklet and self-study guide. Plans for future installments include a resource on how to manage practical activities such as opening bank accounts, and a guide on how to adjust to the U.S. healthcare culture.



KUWAIT

- Kuwait's sports culture combines the traditional sports of nomadic Arabian society like horse and camel racing with contemporary sports of Western origin like soccer and golf.
- When conducting business in Kuwait, your business cards should be printed in English on one side and Arabic on the other.
- In Kuwait, the title Sheikh designates membership in the Kuwaiti royal family.
- In 2003, seven hundred thirty-four nurses took the CGFNS Qualifying exam.

For research, understanding, and collaboration

From the seeds of a strategic goal, CGFNS has implemented a comprehensive program that offers deep insights into the answers for international, national, and individual questions. We have begun to paint the clearest portraits ever seen of healthcare professionals in the global arena.

Refining Data

CGFNS' research agenda continues to uncover insights into the nature of professional migration and the realities of adjusting to new cultures, laws, and systems.

Our Foreign Nurse Graduate Survey of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) identified several key characteristics of those who took the NCLEX-PN™ exam from January 2000 through December 2002. The resulting monograph provides a meaningful look into the education, licensure, and work experience of migrating LPNs, as well as their transitions into and work patterns in the U.S. market.

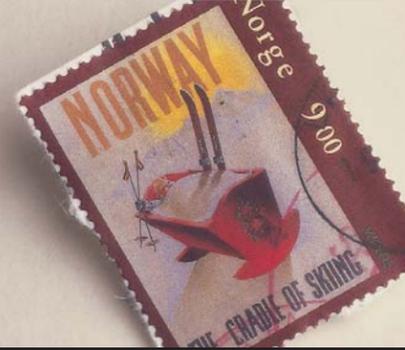
CGFNS completed a Language/Transition Survey in 2003 that revealed how internationally educated nurses feel about the transitions they must make into life and work in the U.S. Overall, this survey indicated that idioms, jargon, and other unique language nuances present

special challenges to those using English as a second language. It also showed that the U.S. healthcare system demands considerable adjustment on the part of those educated and/or with practice experience outside of the country. Another survey of nurse executives uncovered data about the recruitment and retention, and safe practice of internationally educated nurses.

CGFNS also uses objective and proven research techniques to continuously evaluate itself. The 2002-2003 Validity Study, evaluating whether the Certification Program fulfills its mission of predicting success on the NCLEX-RN™ exam, indicated that the passing rate on the licensure exam for all CGFNS certificate holders in the study period increased from the previous year, continuing a three-year trend.

We also undertook to evaluate emerging NCLEX-RN™ exam test content and structure to ensure that our 2004 Qualifying Exam reflects the NCLEX-RN™ exam's evolution from a purely multiple-choice exam. Finally, two test item writer's workshops were held in 2003 to increase the number of questions in our test bank.

Collaboration with other experts has contributed greatly to the robust nature of our research agenda. Excelsior College administered a March 2003 survey of internationally educated nurses that determined their sense of clinical competence in various settings and will help us develop modular tools to increase their clinical confidence. We will work with the University of Pennsylvania to develop course modules for raising performance with technology commonly used in clinical settings. Drexel University ran a June 2003 test of the Qualifying Exam to determine if applicants would be interested in such an approach to test taking. Temple University has helped CGFNS develop modules for Chinese nurses to help them understand the U.S. healthcare system and nursing in the U.S. In addition to providing valuable insights, these efforts help us better protect the public by enhancing on-the-job performance.



NORWAY

- Although Norway comprises one of the world's smaller language communities, the country is among the leaders in books published per capita.
- The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Norway.
- The Norwegian language is a Germanic language related to Icelandic, Danish and Swedish. It has 2 forms, a book language used in schools and a commonly spoken language.
- People greet each other by saying Morn (which means "morning") at any time of day.

For awareness, exchange, and celebration

Our effort to raise awareness of CGFNS at home and around the globe enhances awareness of the public and professions we serve. This promises to fuel greater understanding of the ties that bind us all.

CGFNS' signature annual event, the International Distinguished Leadership Award Symposium and Tribute Dinner, takes place for the third time on December 3, 2003. The symposium will focus on "Power, Politics, Policy, and Practice in a Global Context," a professional focus of Gloria R. Smith, PhD, RN, FAAN, who will receive the 2003 leadership award during the event.

Dr. Smith, elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in 1997, is nationally and internationally recognized for her contributions to nursing, healthcare education, and public health initiatives. She has served as Dean of the College of Nursing at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, Director of the Michigan Department of Public Health, Lansing, and Dean of the College of Nursing at the University of Oklahoma,

Oklahoma City. She also is a former member of the faculties of Tuskegee University in Alabama, and Albany State College in Georgia.

Dr. Smith also served as Vice President for programs at the WK Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. In this role, she led program development and administration, and program/project evaluation and dissemination. Dr. Smith also provided leadership for the foundation's health programs.

Research Fund Event

CGFNS launched a new annual event, the CGFNS Golf Invitational, on September 22, 2003 at the Philadelphia Country Club. The tournament serves as an annual fundraiser for our Education/Research Fund. The fund will provide scholarships, fellowships, and international exchange activities to address the current nursing shortage in the U.S. Fellowships will bring international faculty and registrars to the U.S., while grant programs will support collaboration between international and U.S. schools.

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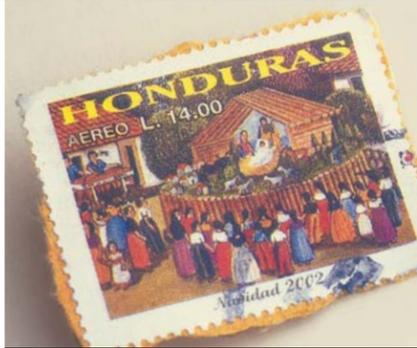
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HONDURAS

- Honduras has been inhabited since well before the 1st century AD. The ruins at Copán in western Honduras indicate that the area was the center of Mayan civilization before the Maya migrated to the Yucatán Peninsula.
- Men shake hands in greeting. Women often pat each other on the right arm or shoulder instead of shaking hands. If they are close friends, they may hug or kiss each other on the cheek.
- Most Hispanics have two surnames: one from their father, which is listed first, followed by one from their mother.

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UKRAINE

- The name Ukraine means "borderland," and Ukraine has often constituted the border of several empires.
- Ukraine has six opera theaters, numerous symphony orchestras, academic and folk choirs, and other performing ensembles. Amateur groups of song and dance are very popular.
- Over the centuries the Ukrainian people have evolved a varied folk art. Intricately designed Easter eggs (pysanky) have become popular in many countries that have Ukrainian immigrant populations.

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