

IOMSN UPDATE

Launching Into a New Year of Growth

Welcome to a new year in the field of multiple sclerosis (MS) care and treatment. Last year, the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) and the International Organization of Multiple Sclerosis Nurses (IOMSN) experienced another busy and exciting year of growth in membership numbers, along with an expansion of our educational activities. We are looking forward to our annual meeting "Multiple Sclerosis: Comprehensive Approaches to Complex Challenges," to be held at the Hyatt Regency in Denver, Colorado from May 28th through May 31st, 2008. We hope to see many of you there as this year features a wide range of courses, symposia, workshops, and poster and platform sessions.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to get involved in these organizations. Both the CMSC



(www.ms-care.org) and the IOMSN (www.iomsn.org) have well-coordinated committees and special projects, and both offer certification examinations to help validate your knowledge in the field. Please take the time to visit these websites to review our many activities and let us know if you are interested in helping us

out. We are always seeking participation from our members and would both welcome and encourage your involvement.

These are your organizations and we need you to help us move forward and meet the many challenges that we face in our field of care. [MS](#)



*Colleen Harris, MN, NP, MSCN
President-Elect of CMSC*

MS Nurse Awarded Decoration Badge of Honor By Her Country's President

Eija Luoto, RN, DON, the IOMSN Global Member-at-Large from Finland and President of the Finnish MS Nurses Association, was awarded one of her country's highest honors, the Decoration Badge of Honor, during the 90th Independence Day Celebration of Finland on December 6, 2007. The President of Finland, Tarja Halonen, personally presented the award to Ms. Luoto for her many accomplishments during her more than 20 years in service as a nurse at the Masku Neurological Lab in Finland. The Masku Lab, located on the west coast of Finland, is one of the premier treatment centers for MS and other neurological disorders in Europe.

In addition to her work as an MS nurse, Ms. Luoto founded the Finnish MS Association in 1998, and currently serves as President to this and the Rehabilitation in MS (RIMS) organization, and the European Network of MS Centres. This latter organization represents the interdisciplinary collaboration of some 20 of the foremost MS centers in Europe.

For more information on RIMS, visit their website at: www.rims.be. [MS](#)



Eija Luoto was decorated by the Finnish President for her work in MS and other neurologic disorders

IOMSN UPDATE

A Special Update for Our French Canadian IOMSN Members

IOMSN Teleconference—November 2007

Busy schedules and diverse geographical locations made it difficult to have a face-to-face meeting of the Board of Directors. Nevertheless, an hour-and-a-half teleconference held in November 2007 was very productive and we are hoping to meet very soon in the New Year. Educationally speaking, the certification exam is growing and was recently translated into Dutch. It will also be translated into Italian. It is still available in French upon request, for those of you who would like to write the exam. Internationally, the success rate has diminished somewhat and we are therefore thinking of reinstating the review session before writing the exams. In the past year, IOMSN has been asked to endorse a number of publications and initiatives, and we are continuing to develop a framework for our work together with an industry that is more defined, balanced, and unbiased.

The mentorship program is going well. A nurse from Spain will come to Canada to spend time with Colleen Harris. On the American side, four regional programs were very popular and well-praised by non-MS nurses, which reinforced the fact that those programs are essential. Nursing research and article-writing methods could become the subjects of future regional programs or online accredited educational programs. A memorial plaque with the IOMSN logo will be dedicated to Linda Morgante, who passed away in 2007. Finally, I have to mention that the Canadian network of MS Clinics just changed chairmanship: Dr. O'Connor (Toronto) handed over his title to Dr. Mark Freedman (Ottawa!). Happy 2008!

Téléconférence de l'OIISEP (IOMSN), Novembre 2007

L'horaire très chargé et la disposition géographique de chacune n'a pu rendre possible une rencontre face à face du conseil de direction. Néanmoins, la téléconférence d'une heure et demie fut très productive et on garde l'espoir de se rencontrer prochainement en cette nouvelle année. Du côté éducatif, l'examen de certification se développe et s'est vu récemment traduit en hollandais. Il sera aussi traduit en italien. Il est disponible en français pour celles qui désireraient le passer prochainement. Internationalement parlant, le taux de succès des derniers examens semble diminué quelque peu et on pense donc réinstaurer une séance de révision avant les examens. Durant la dernière année, un nombre important de publications et de projets ont demandé notre appui. Nous tentons de définir l'encadrement afin que notre collaboration avec l'industrie pharmaceutique soit équilibrée et non-biaisée.

Le programme de mentorat va bon train, une infirmière viendra d'Espagne pour passer quelque temps avec Colleen Harris. Du côté américain, 4 programmes régionaux ont remporté un fier succès auprès d'infirmières non spécialisées en SEP, démontrant ainsi le besoin d'une telle initiative. La recherche infirmière et l'écriture d'article scientifique pourraient devenir les sujets de futurs programmes régionaux ou d'éducation accréditée en ligne. Une plaque commémorative à l'effigie de IOMSN sera dédiée à Linda Morgante décédée en 2007. Finalement, je ne peux passer sous silence que le réseau canadien des cliniques de sclérose en plaques a changé de présidence. Dr O'Connor, de Toronto, a remis les rênes au Dr Mark Freedman d'Ottawa. Bonne année 2008!



*Guylaine Théorêt, RN, BScN
Coordinatrice Clinique de SEP
L'Hôpital d'Ottawa*

Congratulations to the following candidates who passed the examination for certification in the United States as MS Nurses in November 2007:

Miram C. Ahtoong (USA)	Vivian A. Gaits (USA)	Judy Lima (USA)	Laura A. Popelar (USA)
Joyce Bergstol (USA)	Catherine A. Grimes (USA)	Donna H. Logan (USA)	Marina Jacobi Schrier (THE NETHERLANDS)
Trista Blanchard (USA)	Jodi R. Harrison (USA)	Shelley L. Lott (USA)	Emily E. St. Peter (USA)
Darlene A. Booker (USA)	Pamela A. Hebring (USA)	Jennifer A. Maier ((USA)	Deborah A. Stroud (USA)
Dawn L. Brookfield (UK)	Mt Hofstra (THE NETHERLANDS)	Fiona M. Matheson (UK)	Anita Thomas (USA)
Virginie Cote (CANADA)	Iris Saran Hume (NORTHERN IRELAND)	Kathleen A. Meunier (USA)	Magda Van De Pol-Werkman (THE NETHERLANDS)
Dea C. Crose (USA)	Armeda A. Jost (USA)	Catherine A. Meyer (USA)	Elisabeth C. M. Wessel (THE NETHERLANDS)
Cynthia Jane Dacus (USA)	Kim A. Kay (UK)	Esther Van Mil (THE NETHERLANDS)	Cecile Westdorf, Jr. (THE NETHERLANDS)
Matthew B. Ebacher (USA)	Renea L. Kirby (USA)	Leslie M. Moore (USA)	Elizabeth M. Wilkinson (UK)
Crystal L. Ewing (USA)	Ginette H. Lafontaine (CANADA)	Anne M. Mullin (USA)	
Marian A. Finehirsh (USA)	Judith D. Larkin (USA)	Anne L. Nicholas (USA)	
Ellen G. Foster (USA)	Susan M. Lascon (USA)	Terri Petty (USA)	
Dan B. Fu (USA)		Laurie J. Polonczyk (USA)	

Congratulations also to the following candidates who have met the criteria for re-certification as MS Nurses since November 2007:

Judy L. Allen (USA)	Nicola Embrey (UK)	Susan T. Kain (USA)	Linda Plasche (USA)
Megan Burgess (UK)	Mary Beth Exeler (USA)	Kitty McCarthy (UK)	Josee Poirier (CANADA)
Mary A. Cooper (USA)	Alison J. Geitz (CANADA)	Eilish A. Moran (IRELAND)	Diane Watts (UK)
Lina Corriveau (CANADA)	Marta L. Heffner (USA)	Rosemary Nelson (USA)	
Lillie L. Denny (USA)	Ann Houdek (USA)	Margie L. O'Leary (USA)	

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About MS Certification

Over the past 5 years, more than 650 nurses worldwide have sat for the examination to become certified as MS Nurses. Since the first exam was given in the United States in 2002, additional sites have been added in England, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and most recently, the Netherlands. The questions are developed and maintained by a special independent group of volunteers called the Multiple Sclerosis Nurses International Certification Board (MSNICB).



Constance Easterling, MSN, ARNP, MSCN, is an appointee to the MSNICB

The MSNICB was established by the IOMSN to develop and administer the certification examination for MS nurses. The Board is made up of about 10 North American and international nurses who meet at least once annually to monitor trends in MS care and update the exam questions to reflect changes in current practice. They may also convene at

other times to maintain progress toward those goals. Constance Easterling, MSN, ARNP, MSCN, was appointed to the MSNICB a year ago by IOMSN President Diane Lowden to fill a position being vacated by Amy Perrin Ross, one of the original members of the committee, as liaison to the IOMSN.

The certification process is very specific, Ms. Easterling explains. Candidates for the examination must currently be registered as Registered Nurses (RNs), and it is recommended that they have at least 2 years of experience in MS nursing. The MSNICB works directly with the Professional Testing Center of New York (PTCNY), the organization that develops and administers the test and tallies the scores, to identify questions that will be suitable for the MS nursing population around the world. To achieve that end, each Board member is asked to submit questions for review by the entire group. The majority of questions come from the main body of the IOMSN through members who submit emails to Board members.

What the MSNICB Does

One of the major responsibilities of the MSNICB is to determine the general content for the test, which is divided into four domains: clinical practice, advocacy, educa-

tion, and research. Because the test is given to people with various levels of education and in various areas of clinical practice, it is important to achieve a balance across these domains. "MS nurses from all levels of educational background, from associate degree to doctoral levels, and areas of clinical practice, from home health to research settings, sit for the exam. The MSNICB ensures that the exam reflects current clinical practice regardless of practice site or educational level," Ms. Easterling notes.

The committee sorts the submitted questions to the topic they relate to, and identifies content areas where more questions are needed. Before questions can be added to the test bank, however, the MSNICB conducts an "item review" to evaluate each item's validity and reliability. This is conducted by Board members and RNs who hold current certification as MS nurses.

Next, each question is evaluated for supporting research and/or documentation. One of the committee's goals is to provide the broadest reach for the exam and to make sure that questions are equally appropriate for people in different regions of the world taking the exam. Even among people who speak the same language, there can be variations that can confuse meaning. "For example,

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DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER FOR THE NEXT EXAMINATION SITTINGS!

The next Multiple Sclerosis Certified Nurse (MSCN) examination will be held in Denver, Colorado on May 28, 2008, at the CMSC Annual Meeting. A multisite examination will be offered on Saturday, May 31, 2008.

For updated information and applications for this and the MS Certified Specialist Exams, go to www.ptcny.com.

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what people in the United States refer to as a 'cane' is called a 'walking stick' in England, so we have to make sure that the language is understood by all nurses sitting for the exam," she says.

"Some of the goals we have for the coming year are to increase the number of items in our question bank so that we can adequately cover all of the concepts. We are really in need of more questions related to education, advocacy, and research."

Once questions have been determined to be valid, with proper sourcing, and have been sorted for content area, they are put into a question bank. The questions are then reviewed again by the Board members and a representative from PTCNY during a 2-day meeting each February. PTCNY then selects from this vast bank of items the 150 questions that will appear on the exam.

The test is given at least twice annually in the United States and at the CMSC annual meeting. The Board reviews the need and interest in having additional translations of the examination added each year to the versions previously given in French Canadian as well as English. This past year, the test was translated into Dutch and was given in the Netherlands to 32 Dutch nurses.

Recertification Trends and Options

The first group of nurses who sat for the original MS certification examination in 2002 just came up for recertification in 2007, which is required every 5 years to maintain certified status. "Lynn McEwan, Chair of the Recertification Subcommittee of the MSNICB, worked very hard to make sure that everyone understood the recertification guidelines, and that the applications were processed appropriately," Ms. Easterling reports.

INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH THE WORLD? JOIN THE IOMSN!

See our website at www.iomsn.org for more information, or to get back issues of *MS Exchange* and *The International Journal of MS Care*.

Despite these efforts, not all of the 180 candidates who passed the certification examination in 2002 have applied for recertification, which Ms. Easterling feels is due to the fact that some may be planning to resit for the exam this coming year, rather than submitting the learning activity credits. "We won't know the exact number of recertifications for several months yet," she adds.

Recertification can be achieved by taking the test again, or you can do learning activities, to accumulate the continuing education hours needed. Learning activities include taking seminars and approved classes, such as those given at the annual Consortium meeting or through regional meetings conducted by the CMSC. Nurses can also accrue credit by presenting lectures, publishing an article, or doing research or mentoring activities. Nurses are required to submit careful records of their learning activities, which are each given a specific point value. The accumulation of 75 MS learning activity hours or 50 MS learning activity hours plus 1,000 clinical practice hours qualifies a nurse for MS recertification without having to sit for the test again.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

To learn more about the certification process and to obtain the complete guidelines for recertification, visit the IOMSN site at: <http://www.msnicb.org/Recertification.htm>

To obtain a Handbook for Candidates, including all application materials, as well as a list of suggested readings and references, visit the test administrator site at: www.ptcny.com.

The MSNICB continues to work to improve and develop the certification examination for each coming year. "It's a huge, but rewarding, responsibility to try to put together an exam for MS nurses from around the world," Ms. Easterling says. "Some of the goals we have for the coming year are to increase the number of items in our question bank so that we can adequately cover all of the concepts. We are really in need of more questions related to education, advocacy, and research." And of course, the MSNICB looks to the entire IOMSN community for feedback as they continue to improve the certification process and enhance the value of the examinations. **MS**

Contact Connie Easterling directly with your questions, comments, or suggestions about the certification process at: ceasterling@cfl.rr.com.