UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF THE CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST

NACNS is the only association dedicated to representing the more than 70,000 clinical nurse specialists (CNSs) working in the United States. The CNS role is complex and multi-faceted, and CNSs sometimes aren't visible as other APRN or nursing roles but they have been a vital part of the health care industrial complex for more than 60 years.

CLINICAL EXPERTISE
NURSING PRACTICE
SYSTEMS INNOVATION

NACNS
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists

FACT OR FICTION?

CNSs only work with patients at the bedside.

FICTION! CNSs work across three spheres of influence, not only through their clinical expertise at the bedside but also through their work to better nursing practice and system innovation. The 2016 CNS Census found that CNSs spend most of their time providing direct patient care (22%), teaching nurses and staff (20%), consulting with nurses, staff and others (20%), leading evidence-based practice projects (14%) and assisting other nurses and staff with direct patient care (12%).

FACT OR FICTION?

The CNS and CNL role are essentially interchangeable.

FICTION! Clinical nurse specialists are one of the four types of advanced practice registered nurses, CNLs are NOT APRNs. CNSs have either a master's or Doctorate in nursing. They are trained in physiology, pharmacology and physical assessment, in addition to their area of specialty.

FACT OR FICTION?

Many CNSs oversee purchasing decisions at their hospital or health system.

FACT! A recent survey found that 9 in 10 CNSs are actively involved in purchasing decisions at their facilities.

FACT OR FICTION?

CNSs are not eligible to prescribe drugs or durable medical equipment.

FICTION! Prescriptive authority is a matter of state law, but CNSs in 39 states are either eligible to prescribe independently or can prescribe if they have a collaborative agreement with a physician.

FACT OR FICTION?

CNSs are experts in a specialty, problem, setting, type of care or disease.

FACT! CNSs are not like other APRNs. They can work with patients who are acutely ill or chronically ill. A CNSs specialty may be identified in terms of a population (ex. pediatrics or women's health), a setting (ex. ED or critical care), a disease (ex. Diabetes), type of care (ex. psychiatric), or type of problem (ex. pain).