

With certification becoming increasingly critical, targeted strategies help infection preventionists achieve this important professional milestone.

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Earlier this year, nearly 800 infection preventionists from the United States and Canada completed a brief online survey for CBIC to help with strategic planning. Soon, even more of you will have provided us with a snapshot of your professional life by completing our Practice Analysis. Your responses will be used to create a new template for CIC certification exams beginning in 2010. Thank you to all who provided this tremendous reality check on our profession. I'd also like to thank CBIC board members Linda Laxson, RN, BSN, CIC and Paul Field, the professional consultant and business strategist who serves as our consumer director, for developing the perceptions survey.

We know that the vast majority of infection preventionists are not certified, and wanted to better understand motivational factors. Paul described the responses as "an interesting mix of self actualization, management and facility encouragement and requirements." Achieving CIC status was related to recognition, professionalism and personal satisfaction.

Sadly, many infection preventionists indicated that administration did not actively support certification or infection prevention; respondents said they paid exam costs from their own personal funds. We have seen such a significant change in healthcare in the past few years. Tremendous attention is being focused on prevention, patient safety, reimbursement for HALs, professional competency and public reporting. Why isn't certification status included in that focus more often?

Perhaps you're familiar with the term "magnet hospital." Magnet designation indicates that a hospital has created an environment that supports nursing practice, leadership and decision-making, and focuses on professional autonomy, education and career development. Organizations vying for this award must meet more than 65 standards developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Extensive written documentation is submitted, and this is followed up by a thorough site visit.

Many of these necessary components to successful practice also describe the evolution of today's successful infection prevention program. APIC leadership has provided many opportunities for infection preventionists to grow and flourish, including the use of business models to highlight accomplishments. Perhaps you personally benefited from this expertise by sending a crafted e-mail from APIC's website to decision makers in your organization to ask for support to attend the Annual Conference.

CBIC had similar concerns about respondents who indicated on the survey that a major barrier to obtaining CIC status was exam costs. While approximately \$300 every five years is not an enormous sum of money, maybe now is the time to provide our administrations with provocative dialogue similar to the information APIC provided in the conference e-mail: "Compare the cost of attending to the cost of a single MRSA infection (approximately \$28,000) and I am sure you agree it is money well invested. Now is not the time to fall behind on performance improvement and application of evidence-based practice on our ability to meet growing regulatory requirements."

Powerfully stated. However, many of us aren't that proficient at asking for financial support – we haven't had much experience. While many hospitals seeking magnet status have started to fund certification for infection preventionists, CBIC thought it might be helpful to have some talking points to request support for your quest for certification. Please check the CBIC website at www.cbic.org to find some suggested wording for your funding request.

Another barrier to certification identified by many respondents concerned inconvenient testing locations. CBIC employs Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP) to provide our testing services. AMP works with approximately 100 organizations and provides 170 secure, proctored, computer-based testing sites across the United States, primarily in H&R Block offices. AMP owns all computer equipment and trains test center proctors, who also must pass an examination that covers all significant tasks – candidate check-in, creating a secure, standardized testing environment, dealing with irregularities and issuing score reports.

While it may seem that there should be more testing sites available, just remember that individuals only have to recertify every five years and there are only a few thousand CIC certified individuals. New test site selection is generally based on candidate volumes, and AMP has continued to add test sites during the past 10 years as this technology has developed.

For more information about certification, please visit our websites www.cbic.org and www.goamp.com. 

