

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NANB Board Implements Regulation Changes to Support Nursing Graduates

Fredericton, December 11, 2015 – The Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) is legally mandated under the *Nurses Act*, to protect the public by regulating members of the nursing profession in the province. One element of the regulatory requirement to practice nursing is to pass a national entry-to-practice exam, which is administered across Canada. Since introducing the new entry-to-practice exam in January 2015, results for New Brunswick graduates (now overall at 71%) continue to rank lowest in Canada. The ongoing low success rate prompted the twelve member volunteer Board of Directors for NANB to convene and discuss an immediate action plan to support nursing graduates during this challenging transition period.

“Although there are a number of variables associated with the results; two factors appear to be creating significant stress for nursing graduates,” says Laurie Janes, Executive Director of the NANB. “The number of times a graduate can write the exam, and the period of temporary registration are definite areas of concern.”

During the December 8th Board meeting, Directors discussed and approved regulation that changes the number of times that writing attempts are permitted, over a two year period of temporary registration. Previously, temporary registration was cancelled following a second unsuccessful attempt to attain a passing score on the exam. This contributed to the economic burden for nursing graduates and their families and generated stress on human resources within the healthcare system. NANB staff are communicating with nursing graduates, employers and other stakeholder groups about the new regulation changes.

To address concerns from Francophone graduates, educators and community, NANB is engaged in a review with the provincial government to validate the process used for translation. Both NANB and the exam provider are agreeable to an external review of the exam questions, if deemed necessary.

Access to preparatory resource materials is a continuing concern from francophone students. NANB continues to post bilingual resources on the NANB website. The resources and links on the NANB website were identified as key materials for graduates and educators as early as 2013. NANB translated or validated translation of all posted materials. NB nursing graduates also have access to bilingual exam preparatory workshops, as well as additional studies through the RN-PDC (RN-Professional Development Centre) based in Atlantic Canada. NB graduates have engaged in activities offered through that organization.

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What is not available to Francophone nursing graduates are commercial/retail materials, similar to “prep guides” offered by third parties in English for the new exam. Commercial “prep guides” are not endorsed by NANB since the quality of content can vary widely. However in recognition of the concern, NANB is involving other Canadian nursing stakeholder groups and government officials in order to access funding for development of a “prep guide” offered in both official languages. The responsibility for development and delivery of such a resource needs to be determined, as development and delivery of exam preparation guides and materials is not a mandate of NANB.

Finally, NANB is addressing the considerable and concerning amount of misinformation circulating among nursing graduates, nursing organizations and other groups within NB and across Canada. The predominant areas of incorrect information continue to focus on the perception that the new exam is a US exam with US pharmaceutical and health system content, and that it does not test for Canadian nursing competencies. This information is incorrect.

Development of an exam that could be used for nurses both in Canada and the US began in 2010. Since that time studies were completed that indicate both US and Canadian nurses require the same competencies as they transition from a student role to practising nurse. The exam is only “American” in the sense that the exam designed to test Canadian as well as US nursing competencies was purchased from a US-based exam provider, just as are some exams offered within Canada for nurse practitioners.

In preparation for the exam all questions containing trade names for pharmaceutical products were removed. Following comments from nursing graduates and students post-implementation, the data bank for questions was screened again. Results verified there are no questions including trade names for pharmaceuticals, or questions pertaining to the US health system, which graduates had also reported.

NANB continues to support nursing graduates and work with other nursing organizations to ensure enhanced success for the nursing profession now and into the future.

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