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Correcting inaccuracies about the new nursing exam

For Canadian regulators, the NCLEX exam tests if a potential nurse will be able to provide safe care to the public

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2015 (Toronto) — Recently, several areas of misinformation have appeared in media coverage of the new national nursing exam (NCLEX) that the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators would like to correct.

The NCLEX is not an “American” exam, nor is it a Canadian exam: it is a nursing exam. It does not test the writer’s knowledge of a particular health care system, history or legislation. It tests whether an applicant to the nursing profession has the knowledge, skill and judgment needed to provide safe care to the public. For example, the exam tells us whether an applicant is able to: assess and respond to changes in vital signs; perform comprehensive health assessments; assess a client’s need for pain management; perform calculations needed to safely administer medications; and maintain client confidentiality and privacy. It tests content that is part of the entry-to-practice competencies that form the basis for Canadian university nursing programs. In 2011, CCRNR announced to educators the change to the use of the NCLEX, giving nursing programs three years to prepare for the exam’s launch on January 1, 2015. Throughout that time, educators had access to several resources giving them the information they needed to prepare students for the exam.

It is important to note that the purpose of the exam is for nursing regulators to determine that nurses entering the profession have the knowledge and skills needed to ensure public safety.

On September 8, CCRNR released preliminary pass rate results for the new exam. Representing only six months of data, the report shows a wide variance in the results across educational institutions within provinces and territories, as well as across the country. With any new exam, we expect to see variance in the results as educators and students become familiar with the requirements and new testing structure. We continue to monitor the results of the exam and continue to work with educators.

Canadian nurses from the 10 provinces/territories using the test participated in the development of the NCLEX currently in use, and continue to participate in its review to ensure it meets the needs of Canadian regulators and is free of bias.

To provide additional clarity around the exam and these preliminary results, CCRNR is providing the included [Fact Sheet](#).

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