

Letter to the editor

The recently published articles by the President of AICA, Dolly Olesen and Deborah Macbeth in *Australian Infection Control*, identified a vital need to implement a credentialling process to raise the profile of the specialist practitioner and to develop a defined career pathway^{1,2}.

To date, this has been sadly lacking. The changes in the health care sector have placed huge demands on nurses, including infection control practitioners (ICPs), who work in the specialty areas of practice. They are expected to deal with highly complex clinical situations which require substantial knowledge and clinical competence, skills which are often largely unrecognised. ICPs need to promote a public image of the services that they provide, to promote delivery of high standards of care and optimum infection control best practice³.

The NSW Health Department and the NSW Nurses' Association have developed new grading levels for the clinical

nurse consultant (CNC) classification⁴. This now means that area health services will establish CNC positions at a higher grade only following careful review. However, there is an urgent need to achieve *national* accreditability through an established standard, even though ICPs generally have not embraced the proposal. I trust that members will reconsider this important move forward and embrace the process with enthusiasm. I endorse the views presented by Dolly Olesen and Deborah Macbeth for progressing this issue.

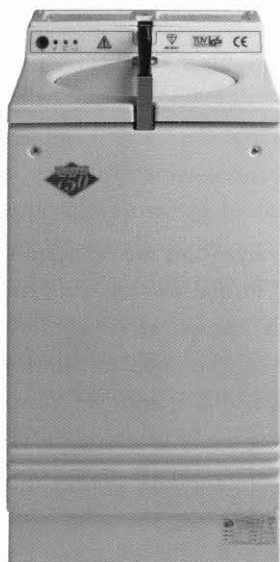
References

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3. Wehrhagen R, McKieran N. Credentialling and clinical privileging experience at a tertiary care centre. *Journal of Nursing Quality Assurance* 1991; 5(3).
4. NSW Health Department. Public Hospital Nurses' (State) Award Clinical Nurse Consultant - Higher Grades. Circular No. 2000/1.

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