



Clinical Nurse Specialist Association of Canada **CNS-C**
Association des infirmières et infirmiers cliniciens spécialisés du Canada **ICS-C**

Unlocking the Myths about CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALISTS

The Clinical Nurse Specialist Association of Canada (CNS-C) is the only association dedicated to representing Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) in Canada. CNSs' practice is complex and multi-faceted. CNSs have been a vital part of the health care system for more than 60 years. CNS-C provides a leadership platform through which Canadian CNSs impact and influence cost-effective health care system change to support safe, quality care and superior outcomes. The CNS-C was officially incorporated in January 2016 and the CNSs on the board of directors represent all regions of the country.

~~~~~

### Myth and Facts

**Myth: Clinical Nurse Specialists work *only* with patients at the bedside in hospitals.**

**Facts:** Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) work in a variety of settings and systems to improve the care of patients, families, communities and/or populations with high risk and complex conditions. CNS practice includes both direct client care and indirect activities such care coordination, education, consultation, advocacy, quality improvement, policy development and research. CNSs work with clients, students, healthcare professionals, agencies, communities, government, and other stakeholders.

**Myth: The roles of Clinical Nurse Specialists and Nurse Practitioners are essentially *interchangeable*.**

**Facts:** Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) are one of two types of advanced practice registered nurses and they are not synonymous. A CNS is a registered nurse with advanced nursing knowledge and skills in making complex decisions based on education at a master's or doctoral degree in nursing. The graduate nursing program includes courses and advanced clinical nursing practice in a specialty area. CNS practice includes direct complex care; education; research; leadership; policy; consultation and collaboration; and a health systems approach.

**Myth: Clinical Nurse Specialists are *expensive* healthcare practitioners.**

**Facts:** Research has shown that Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) lower costs by reducing hospital admissions and visits to the emergency room, shortening hospital stays and decreasing the use of unnecessary diagnostic tests. CNSs contribute to seamless transitions in care, decreased complication rates and mortality, and improved quality of life, physical functioning and well-being. CNSs also reduce healthcare costs by providing comprehensive discharge planning and home follow-up in collaboration with the healthcare team.

**Myth: Clinical Nurse Specialist is *a protected title* in Canada.**

**Facts:** In Canada, Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) have no title protection and are regulated as Registered Nurses. The CNS-C believes that title protection for CNSs is important to ensure that they have the necessary education, experience and competencies to carry the title and can work to their optimal scope of practice. The province of Quebec is the only province at this time, that has title protection and regulations for clinical nurse specialists in infection control and prevention.

**Myth: Clinical Nurse Specialists are *the same* as all other nurses.**

**Facts:** Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) are versatile and flexible. There are different education requirements and qualifications required for CNSs compared to other nurses. CNSs have competencies in direct comprehensive care, education, research, leadership, consultation, collaboration and health system optimization. CNSs are involved in the assessment, management and care of complex, vulnerable and marginalized populations, support of interdisciplinary staff, and facilitation of change and innovation within the healthcare system. CNSs promote evidence-informed practice, improve quality of care, and produce positive client outcomes.

**Myth: Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) are *new* to the healthcare system.**

**Facts:** Clinical Nurse Specialists have been practicing in the healthcare system for over 60 years.

## References & Resources

Canadian Nurses Association (CNA). (2019). Advanced Practice Nursing a Pan-Canadian Framework. Canadian Nurses Association. Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://www.cna-aiic.ca/-/media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/apn-a-pan-canadian-framework.pdf>

Canadian Nurses Association (CNA). Other resources. <https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/nursing-practice/the-practice-of-nursing/advanced-nursing-practice/clinical-nurse-specialists/clinical-nurse-specialist-resources>

Clinical Nurse Specialist Association of Canada (CNS-C). Other resources. <http://cns-c-canada.ca/>

International Council of Nurses (ICN). (2020). Guidelines on Advanced Practice Nursing. [www.icn.ch/system/files/documents/2020-04/ICN APN%20Report EN WEB.pdf](http://www.icn.ch/system/files/documents/2020-04/ICN_APN%20Report_EN_WEB.pdf)

McMaster University. (2015). The Clinical Nurse Specialist, Getting Good Return on Healthcare Investment. McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada. [https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ccapnr/documents/onp\\_project/CNS\\_Brief\\_final.pdf](https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ccapnr/documents/onp_project/CNS_Brief_final.pdf)  
[https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ccapnr/documents/onp\\_project/CNS\\_Brief\\_Refs\\_final.pdf](https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ccapnr/documents/onp_project/CNS_Brief_Refs_final.pdf)

**Developed by** the following members of the Board of Directors of Clinical Nurse Specialist Association of Canadian (CNS-C): Mary-Lou Martin, Paul-André Gauthier, Elisabeth Jensen, Sherri Lynn Kensall, Sonia Boccardi, Shauna Maltby-Doane. September 2021.

**Clinical Nurse Specialist Association of Canada. CNS-C.**

**Website –** <http://cns-c-canada.ca/> <https://www.facebook.com/cnscanada>