The 2013 Third and Fourth Quarter NCLEX-RN® Results are in….

The increase to the NCLEX-RN® passing standard has created quite a buzz with nurse educators this year. With the inaugural drop in the pass rate during the second quarter of 2013 when the passing standard increase first went into effect, we knew we would need to see more data from subsequent quarters to note any lasting trends. To create a full picture, we also wanted to look at changes to the pass rates in 2010, 2007 and 2003 to note trends in past years.

A few items of interest:

* Historically, the second quarter in each year (when the pass rate does not change) produces the highest pass rate.
* Historically, the fourth quarter has the lowest pass rate regardless of whether or not there was a change to the passing standard.
* Historically, the first and third quarters usually have similar pass rates.

As a reminder, when the passing standard went from -0.16 to 0.00 logits in the second quarter of 2013 (April 1st to June 30th), the pass rate for first-time US educated test-takers was 83%. This represented a drop of nearly 10% from the same time period in 2012. This change in the passing standard is one of the more notable in recent NCLEX scoring history. Comparatively, in 2010 when the passing standard increased from -0.21 to -0.16 logits, the second quarter pass rate was 90.28% which was a slight decrease from the 90.79% pass rate in the second quarter of 2009. In 2007, the passing standard went from -0.28 to -0.21 logits in the second quarter, and the pass rate decreased to 87.6% from 90.5% in the second quarter of 2006. Finally, if we go back to 2004 when the passing standard went from -0.35 to -0.28 logits in the second quarter, the pass rate went to 88.5% from 90.1% in the second quarter of 2003.

Does a larger drop in the pass rate correlate to a larger change in the passing standard? There are too many variables affecting student preparation to allow us to draw that conclusion, but we can note that the third and fourth quarters of this year also have produced significant drops. The third quarter pass rate was 80.78%, and the fourth quarter pass rate is 69.00% which is lowest pass rate since the move to the Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) in 1994.

We have also looked at the pass rates for US educated repeat test-takers. Repeat test takers have always had a lower passing percentage than the first time test-takers, and in 2013 we see that those pass rates have dropped even lower. The 29.91% in the second quarter of 2013 is the lowest in modern NCLEX-RN® history. The pass rate for repeat US-Educated candidates rebounded to 57.05 in the third quarter, but dropped to 45.12% in the fourth quarter. It is important to identify at-risk students prior to taking the NCLEX-RN®.

The chart below provides comparison among the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarters for the years prior the change in the passing standard and the years in which the passing standard changed. The change in logits is indicated in parentheses.

Number in parentheses signifies the changes in logits.

The drops in 2013 are not totally unexpected. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) reports expected drops of 3 – 5% when the passing standard changes. However, the decrease in the pass rate this year is greater than in the past. We know that while national trends are revealing, each school needs to examine its own results carefully. The NCLEX-RN® tests critical thinking/clinical judgment. Kaplan Nursing finds that students who focus solely on content when they prepare for the test may be at a significant disadvantage and at risk for not passing.

Kaplan is presenting two excellent, free online events to help students and faculty navigate through the increased passing standard. Please share the following with your colleagues and students:

**For Faculty:**

Since the passing standard increased in April 2013, a greater percentage of students are failing the NCLEX-RN. In fact, between July and September 2013, one in every five RN students failed the test.\*

**What does this mean for you and your students? How can you help them master the new test plan and harder passing standard?**

Barbara Irwin, MSN, RN and Executive Director of Kaplan Nursing, will discuss these crucial points and other essential details in our upcoming online event, free for nursing faculty.

This workshop will be held in our innovative Classroom Anywhere environment, which means you can participate live from anywhere you have an internet connection. You will receive an email with access to the website prior to the date of the event.

**NCLEX-RN®: Behind the Passing Rate Decline**

**Wednesday, February 19 2014 at 7:00 PM ET**

**Go to** [**http://bit.ly/KzPfl4**](http://bit.ly/KzPfl4) **to register!**

**For students:**

**Attend our free live online event to learn more about how you can master the new test plan and passing standard.**

**Tuesday, February 4th at 7:00pm ET**

**Register:** [**http://www.kaptest.com/class/NKUA14028**](http://www.kaptest.com/class/NKUA14028)

Pass rates can be a sensitive topic, but as you start to analyze your school’s performance we’d love to hear about your successes and lessons learned. The national nursing community can benefit from your experiences to make sure the next generation of test takers is prepared for the new education challenges!

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\*National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Exam Statistics and Publications, https://www.ncsbn.org/1232.htm