



A New Era for Cardiac Care Associates

By Margo Minissian, A.C.N.P.–B.C., M.S.N.

Since its inception in 2004, the ACC's Cardiac Care Associate (CCA) community has shown exceptional growth. Initially, it comprised registered nurses, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and physician assistants who are engaged in the treatment and management of cardiovascular medicine. In 2008, clinical pharmacists were also welcomed to this specialized group. From that small group of 100 to 150 members in 2004, the CCA community has grown to more than 4,000 members.

The original leaders on the CCA Committee worked hard with the College leadership to develop ideas and education initiatives that would meet the needs of all the members of the cardiac care team.

CCA members have always attended the Annual Scientific Session, but in recent years, CCA members have sat on the Annual Scientific Session Program Committee, made presentations during the meeting and guided the development of and participated in the Cardiac Care Team Spotlight.

In Spring 2008, the College surveyed the CCA membership to further assess their needs and determine what the next steps might be for this vibrant community. The survey results helped to stimulate two important transitions for the CCA community.

First, it was apparent from the survey that the CCA members wished to have an official member designation that recognized their education and national board certification. To that end, a work group was formed to research and develop an appropriate designation. In December 2008,

Cardiovascular Team (CVT) Council and Section Governance

BOT ADVISORS

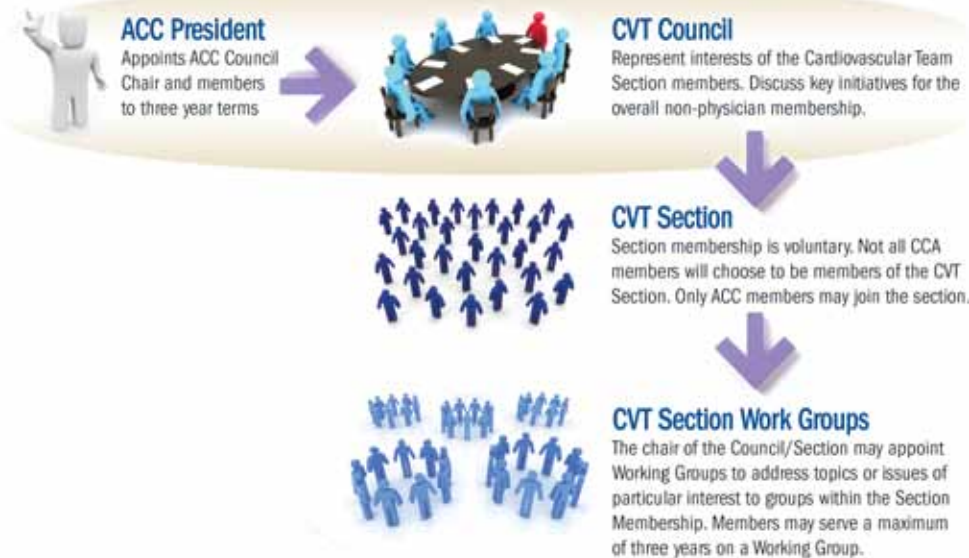


Table 1

AAAC Candidate Qualifications

State licensure and a nationally recognized board certification
Majority of their professional activities in cardiovascular (CV) disease
Three (3) sponsorship letters from current F.A.C.C. members, representing different institutions
Once A.A.C.C. qualifications are established, two peer-sponsorship letters
Employment in practice that is primarily (at least 75 percent) CV-focused
At least five years in CV practice
Two years as a CCA member
At least 12 hours of CV-related CE/CME/CEU credit hours annually
Membership in ACC's Cardiovascular Team Section

the work group presented the designation of Associate of the American College of Cardiology (A.A.C.C.) to the ACC Board of Trustees (BOT) for approval. The A.A.C.C. designation is now official for CCA members who meet the initial criteria as seen in *Table 1*. *The complete application process for A.A.C.C. is still being formulated and will be available later in the year.*

In addition to the A.A.C.C., CCA members who are researchers and/or professors and hold doctorate degrees may

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qualify as a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology. **Eileen M. Handberg, Ph.D., F.A.C.C.**, is the first CCA member to advance to Fellow of the American College of Cardiology.

The second step taken by the BOT was to move the CCA membership into a new, official section and council — the Cardiovascular Team (CVT) Section and Council. Through the CVT section, the ACC will provide the opportunity to reach out via education, science, research, quality and advocacy with programs and work groups for this membership. As with other ACC sections and councils, the CVT Council will report directly to the BOT.

The CVT Section's goals will be to provide a point of identification and forum to engage associated health care professionals who already are key members of ACC. This will be done by encouraging educational opportunities and the advancement of quality initiatives that reinforce patient care and improve the outcome efforts of the College.

Meet Eileen Handberg, ACC's First Nurse F.A.C.C.

More than 300 new Fellows were admitted to the ACC at the 58th Annual Convocation at ACC.09 in Orlando, and among them was the first nurse to receive the F.A.C.C. designation — **Eileen M. Handberg, Ph.D., A.R.N.P.** and now — **F.A.C.C.**

When she was interviewed after the ceremony, Handberg applauded the great opportunities that the College extended when it opened membership to nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and pharmacists. She noted that bringing these disciplines together has added a new breadth of knowledge, expertise and perspectives on patient care to the College.

Handberg is associate professor of medicine in the division of cardiovascular medicine at the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville. She served as the UF principal investigator for the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)-sponsored HF-ACTION trial and is a co-investigator of the National Institute of Health Women's Ischemic Syndrome Evaluation Study. She recently completed a four-year term as chair of the Nurse Education Committee (NEC) for the ACC. During her time as NEC's first chair, the NEC launched the Foundations

for Practice Excellence: Core Curriculum for the Cardiovascular Clinician course and published the Scope and Standards of Practice for Cardiovascular Nursing, which was drafted by a task force of 16 nursing organizations focused in cardiovascular nursing and led by Handberg.

