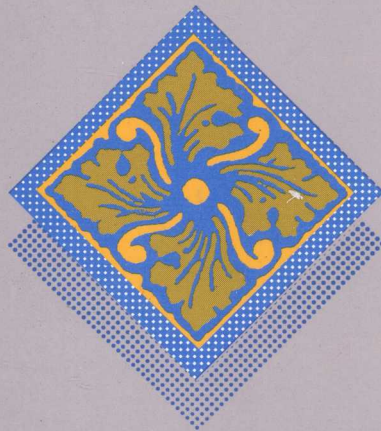


Clinical Skills
and
Assessment
Techniques in
Nursing
Practice



Vicki Vine Earnest

CLINICAL SKILLS AND ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES IN NURSING PRACTICE

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Preface

Nursing education is an intensely challenging experience for both the nursing instructor and the nursing student. Because nurses literally hold life and death in their hands, the nursing student must develop and integrate critical thinking and psychomotor skills as well as absorb a broad range of social and scientific information for safe and effective clinical practice in a relatively brief period of time. In recent years, the breadth and depth of learning required of the nursing student have multiplied many times over, keeping pace with a knowledge explosion in health care and expanded expectations of nursing practice. *Clinical Skills and Assessment Techniques in Nursing Practice* is intended to guide the student through the beginning phases of becoming a nurse. As a textbook for the first clinical course, this work integrates basic science and nursing theory with clear and orderly instruction for performing assessment and clinical skills.

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this book is to teach the student to think and act the nursing process from the beginning of nursing education. This is achieved through blending nursing philosophy with a pragmatic educational philosophy to present a logical, understandable framework for clinical practice.

The fundamental nursing philosophy supporting this book is that all nursing actions are deliberate, purposeful, based on scientific principles, performed as a problem-solving process, and directed toward specific client outcomes. This is the nursing process. Within a health care agency, the nurse is a case manager working for the welfare of the client, analyzing data, and planning, implementing, and coordinating nursing and medical strategies that support therapies, maintain or improve the client's current functions, and teach and promote health practices.

The educational philosophy of this book, developed through years of classroom and clinical teaching, is simply stated: Doing is learning. Every assessment technique and skill must be performed in order to be learned. Similarly, the essence of nursing practice—problem solving—must be performed in order to be learned. The student quickly develops case management abilities when assessment techniques, data analysis to determine a diagnostic category, and the clinical skills for treating the nursing diagnosis are combined as a single practice. In other words, the student absorbs a great deal of information quickly when the nursing process is presented and practiced as a whole rather than in bits and pieces here and there. This is the nursing process in living action rather than a dry academic theory.

To achieve these philosophic premises, this book describes step-by-step actions for *each* phase of the nursing process: assessment, data analysis and diagnostic formulation, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Explanations for integrating the dependent functions of supporting medical therapies are provided to guide the

learning nurse toward an understanding of the dual independent and dependent roles of the nurse. Ultimately, the student gains a foundation of effective communication and psychomotor skills combined with physical assessment techniques upon which to build more complex knowledge and nursing practice. Solidly entrenched in this foundation is the ability to plan client outcomes and to determine and implement strategies to achieve them.

The clinical skills and assessment techniques included in this book are those required to fulfill the role of case manager. Communicating, interviewing, teaching, and developing care plans are as important as assessing clinical data or helping the client to exercise, providing pulmonary physiotherapy, and giving medications. Assessment techniques are limited to those that aid the nurse to identify a nursing diagnosis. The psychomotor skills are those most commonly practiced in a general health agency. More complex, higher-level skills common in specialized practice, such as those used by the intensive care nurse or nurse practitioner, require more clinical knowledge and judgment to master than that possessed by the beginning student, and are beyond the scope of this book.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXTBOOK

The opening chapter of this book begins with explanations of the nursing process, a foundation upon which all subsequent units are built. The basis for a therapeutic nurse–client interaction is effective communication; this is the focus of the first unit, which includes documentation in the health record and development of nursing care plans. With this foundation, each subsequent unit and chapter presents communicating, interviewing, nursing care planning, and documenting as integral parts of each skill.

Units build progressively upon previous units. Maintaining the safety and hygiene of the client are the most elementary and essential of all nursing tasks; this is the focus of the second unit which includes physical and biologic safety, skin assessment, and basic hygiene. All data analysis, diagnostic formulation, and decision making require data collection skills; therefore, basic assessment skills are presented in the third unit. Later units are organized according to basic human needs: activity and exercise, comfort, fluids and nutrition, elimination, and oxygenation. When relevant, the opening chapter of these units contains a brief review of the anatomy and physiology of a body system to provide a reference for the step-by-step physical assessment of the structure and function of that system. Other units present specialized areas of nursing practice: the dependent nursing function of medication administration, wound care, managing the client undergoing surgery, and support of medical diagnosis and therapies. One unit is devoted to the management of the dying client and his family.

CHAPTER FORMAT

Each chapter begins with behavioral objectives to guide the student's learning, a list of previously learned skills, and the theory upon which the skills and techniques are based. Key terms are highlighted in boldface and found in a glossary, located at the end of the text. The execution of each skill follows the five phases of the nursing process. The assessment phase of the nursing process is presented as questions to be answered about the subjective and objective condition of the client. Brief data analysis suggests nursing diagnostic categories related to the client's condition. The planning phase demonstrates the development of a care plan, with suggested nursing

objectives and expected client outcomes based on possible diagnoses. Supplies and equipment needed, and an explanation for their uses, are listed. In the implementation phase, the skills and techniques used to achieve the outcomes are described in step-by-step instructions and the scientific rationale for actions are explained. Evaluation is a re-examination of the outcomes. In keeping with the philosophy that nursing is problem solving, each skill concludes with a list of problems that commonly occur with suggestions for solving them. Finally, guidelines for effective documentation in the health record and oral communication to other nurses and health care workers are included.

Other features are included to broaden the base of information. Because nursing practice extends beyond the boundaries of traditional health care agencies and into non-clinical settings such as the home, clinical skills often must be changed when resources or supplies are different or limited. When relevant, home care adaptations are presented, offering suggestions for altering the skill or using commonly found materials or supplies. Following up on the introductory chapter on teaching the client, specific guidelines for teaching self-care skills or health education are presented to stimulate the student's learning of this valuable skill. Every chapter has drawings and photographs to illustrate important points. Each piece of art has been carefully planned and developed to graphically demonstrate concepts that may be difficult to visualize from words alone. When applicable, key information is compiled in tables for easier reference for the student.

ANCILLARIES

Throughout the book, the student is guided toward independent problem solving. To complement suggested problem-solving skills, the companion *Checklist Workbook to Accompany Clinical Skills and Assessment Techniques in Nursing Practice* presents two methods of student self-evaluation on problem solving: quizzes and case studies. The quizzes correspond to the chapters of this book; each quiz evaluates the student's knowledge of the assessment techniques and clinical skills described. The quizzes consist of short answer questions, fill-in-the-blank, matching, brief data analysis, and diagnostic formulation. The case studies correspond to this book's units. Each case study describes a client and his condition followed by a series of questions designed to guide the student toward more complex data analysis, diagnostic formulation, or insight into client behavior. Answers to all questions are contained within the workbook so that the student can obtain immediate feedback on his or her knowledge.

The workbook also contains performance checklists of the various techniques and skills that correspond exactly to the suggested steps in this textbook. These checklists may be used by the student to guide actions in a laboratory or clinical setting; they may be used by the instructor to evaluate the student's performance.

The accompanying instructor's manual offers teaching and learning strategies for classroom and small group activities, suggestions for guest speakers, and laboratory and clinical experiences designed to reinforce the text information. These largely experiential learning strategies enhance learning through action and repetition. The manual also includes a comprehensive list of audiovisual programs and instructional software for the instructor who wishes to supplement classroom, laboratory, and clinical learning.

Together, the textbook, workbook, and instructor's manual present a learning system with the philosophy that all nursing actions are deliberate, purposeful, part of a problem-solving process, and based on scientific knowledge. The student learns skills and techniques that are the foundation of all nursing practice.

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Letter to the Student

You are embarking on an educational experience that will change your way of thinking and feeling forever. Becoming a nurse is learning and growing in many ways: emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually. The process of becoming a nurse is certainly not simple; few nurses suggest it is fun and even fewer nurses suggest that it is easy. Surviving this process will feel wonderful and you will learn that, ultimately, nursing is rewarding and challenging in ways that you cannot even conceive at present.

What is nursing? A difficult question to answer, to be sure, but one that you will ponder many times in the next months and years. What do nurses do? How are these tasks done? Why are these tasks done? These are all difficult questions, but eventually the answers will come to you. This textbook presents some thoughts about the nature and scope of nursing as well as some very specific guidelines for effective and rewarding nursing practice.

If you are similar to most people who become nurses, you like to work with people and are interested in both the art and science of health care. In nursing, the relationship with the client is central to all that we do. This is a very special relationship because it is therapeutic and professional; developing that relationship requires as much knowledge and skill as taking a blood pressure measurement or giving an injection. You already have social skills that have been successful for building and maintaining relationships; now you must learn to fine-tune some of these skills and develop new ones to be effective professionally. The first unit focuses on communication, the cornerstone of all relationships. You will learn some facts about nursing and the nursing process, specific skills of communicating with a client and interviewing, the value and techniques of client education, and the purposes and process of documentation in health care. Every subsequent chapter and unit builds upon this information. All chapters build upon previous chapters so that you progressively expand your knowledge and skills.

Virtually every action performed by a nurse is deliberate, has meaning and is directed toward a specific desired outcome. Taken as a whole, most nursing activity is problem solving. The purpose of this textbook is to help you understand these two basic truths about nursing and develop your clinical skills accordingly. To achieve that purpose, the performance of every skill is given in a step-by-step fashion with a corresponding rationale to explain the purpose of each step. Suggested actions are meant to guide you. As you learn, keep in mind that nursing actions are not all rigidly structured. You may find yourself developing other ways of performing the skills that are equally or even more effective; if your actions are deliberate, reflect sound, scientific information, and achieve the desired outcomes, you have developed your own problem-solving techniques.

Several features are included to enhance your learning. Each chapter begins with a list of behavioral objectives that suggests the knowledge and skills you are ex-

pected to learn. You may use the list as a chapter outline. Each chapter then discusses the scientific information or nursing theory necessary to know when performing a specific assessment technique or skill. Chapters on physical assessment begin with a brief overview of the structure and function of the relevant body system; this overview cannot substitute for a course in anatomy and physiology but can serve as a review. Key terms are highlighted in boldface print and defined in the glossary at the end of the book.

When you have learned the information and mastered the skills of this book, you will have the basic tools necessary to nurse. Add these tools to your commitment to people, and you have a foundation for safe and caring clinical practice. Build on this foundation with advanced knowledge and clinical experience, and you have the components for a rewarding and satisfying career in nursing.

Work hard and enjoy your future.

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Contents

Unit I	FOUNDATIONS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE	1
Chapter 1	Understanding Nursing	3
Chapter 2	Providing Home Care	33
Chapter 3	Communicating	42
Skill 3.1	Communicating with the Client	44
Skill 3.2	Interviewing the Client	57
Chapter 4	Teaching the Client	63
Skill 4.1	Teaching the Client	66
Chapter 5	Reporting and Recording	70
Skill 5.1	Recording	90
Skill 5.2	Reporting	98
Chapter 6	Writing a Nursing Care Plan	101
Skill 6.1	Writing a Nursing Care Plan	108
Unit II	MANAGEMENT OF SAFETY AND HYGIENE	115
Chapter 7	Providing Physical and Biologic Safety	117
Skill 7.1	Applying Restraints	124
Skill 7.2	Handwashing	139
Skill 7.3	Maintaining Surgical Asepsis	143
Skill 7.4	Providing Protective Asepsis	153
Chapter 8	Helping the Client to Dress	175
Skill 8.1	Assisting with Dressing	177
Skill 8.2	Dressing an Infant	188
Chapter 9	Assessing and Bathing the Skin	192
Skill 9.1	Assessing the Skin	197
Skill 9.2	Providing Morning or Evening Care	204
Skill 9.3	Providing the Cleansing Bath	208
Skill 9.4	Providing Perineal Care	218
Skill 9.5	Massaging the Back	224
Chapter 10	Providing Hygiene for the Mouth, Eyes, Hair, and Nails	231
Skill 10.1	Providing Mouth Care	234
Skill 10.2	Providing Eye Care	247
Skill 10.3	Providing Hair Care	254

Skill 10.4	Shaving the Client	261
Skill 10.5	Providing Nail Care	267

Unit III ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES **271**

Chapter 11	Using Techniques of Physical Examination	273
Skill 11.1	Using Techniques of Physical Examination	278
Chapter 12	Assessing the Vital Signs	284
Skill 12.1	Assessing Temperature	291
Skill 12.2	Assessing the Pulse	306
Skill 12.3	Assessing Respirations	315
Skill 12.4	Measuring Blood Pressure	322
Chapter 13	Measuring Weight and Height	330
Skill 13.1	Measuring Weight	333
Skill 13.2	Measuring Height	338
Chapter 14	Admission, Transfer, and Discharge	342
Skill 14.1	Admitting the Client	345
Skill 14.2	Transferring the Client	349
Skill 14.3	Discharging the Client	353

Unit IV MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITY AND MOBILITY **357**

Chapter 15	Assessing Musculoskeletal Function	359
Skill 15.1	Assessing Musculoskeletal Function	363
Chapter 16	Positioning, Moving, and Transferring the Client	371
Skill 16.1	Using Body Mechanics	377
Skill 16.2	Positioning the Client in Bed	386
Skill 16.3	Assisting the Client to Move in Bed	392
Skill 16.4	Transferring the Client	404
Chapter 17	Bedmaking	413
Skill 17.1	Bedmaking	415
Chapter 18	Exercising and Ambulating	429
Skill 18.1	Performing Joint Range of Motion Exercises	434
Skill 18.2	Assisting with Ambulation	443
Skill 18.3	Teaching the Client to Use an Assistive Device with Ambulation	450
Chapter 19	Protecting the Immobile Client	462
Skill 19.1	Placing the Client on a Protective Mattress or Pad	467
Skill 19.2	Turning the Client on a Special Frame	471
Skill 19.3	Managing the Client on an Air-fluidized Bed	479
Chapter 20	Maintaining Therapeutic Immobility	483
Skill 20.1	Applying and Managing a Splint or Brace	487
Skill 20.2	Managing the Client with a Cast	494
Skill 20.3	Managing the Client in Traction	504

Unit V MANAGEMENT OF ANXIETY AND PAIN **511**

Chapter 21	Managing Anxiety	513
Skill 21.1	Managing Anxiety	522

Chapter 22	Managing Pain	528
Skill 22.1	Managing Pain	535

Unit VI MANAGEMENT OF NUTRITION AND FLUIDS **545**

Chapter 23	Assessing Fluid Balance and Nutrition	547
Skill 23.1	Measuring Intake and Output	549
Skill 23.2	Assessing Nutritional Status	563
Chapter 24	Helping the Client Eat	568
Skill 24.1	Feeding the Infant	569
Skill 24.2	Assisting an Adult to Eat	575
Chapter 25	Managing the Client with a Gastrointestinal Tube	581
Skill 25.1	Inserting a Nasogastric Tube	586
Skill 25.2	Managing and Irrigating a Gastric Tube	594
Skill 25.3	Administering Enteral Nutrition	603
Chapter 26	Managing Intravenous Fluid Therapy	610
Skill 26.1	Managing a Continuous Intravenous Infusion	619
Chapter 27	Managing Total Parenteral Nutrition	633
Skill 27.1	Managing Total Parenteral Nutrition	638

Unit VII MANAGEMENT OF ELIMINATION **649**

Chapter 28	Assessing Genitourinary Function	651
Skill 28.1	Assessing Genitourinary Function	657
Chapter 29	Toileting	665
Skill 29.1	Toileting	667
Chapter 30	Inserting and Managing Urinary Catheters	672
Skill 30.1	Catheterizing the Client	675
Skill 30.2	Inserting an Indwelling Catheter	688
Skill 30.3	Removing an Indwelling Catheter	698
Skill 30.4	Applying an External Catheter	700
Skill 30.5	Managing Urinary Drainage Systems	706
Skill 30.6	Irrigating or Instilling into a Bladder or Catheter	710
Skill 30.7	Assembling and Maintaining a Closed Three-Way Bladder Irrigation System	717
Chapter 31	Assessing Bowel Elimination Function	721
Skill 31.1	Assessing Bowel Elimination Function	725
Chapter 32	Removing Feces and Flatus	734
Skill 32.1	Removing Feces or Flatus	743
Chapter 33	Managing the Ostomy	757
Skill 33.1	Managing a Colostomy or Ileostomy	765
Skill 33.2	Irrigating the Colostomy	778
Skill 33.3	Managing a Urinary Ostomy	785

Unit VIII MANAGEMENT OF OXYGENATION **795**

Chapter 34	Assessing Respiratory Function	797
Skill 34.1	Assessing Respiratory Function	804

Chapter 35	Providing Pulmonary Physiotherapy	815
Skill 35.1	Providing Pulmonary Physiotherapy	819
Chapter 36	Administering Oxygen	832
Skill 36.1	Administering Oxygen	840
Chapter 37	Managing the Client with a Chest Tube	850
Skill 37.1	Managing the Client with a Chest Tube	854
Chapter 38	Maintaining an Airway	862
Skill 38.1	Clearing the Airway	866
Skill 38.2	Suctioning the Airway	872
Skill 38.3	Managing the Tracheostomy	886
Chapter 39	Assessing Cardiovascular Function	898
Skill 39.1	Assessing Cardiovascular Function	904
Skill 39.2	Measuring Central Venous Pressure	910
Chapter 40	Providing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	914
Skill 40.1	Providing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	917

Unit IX MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION 927

Chapter 41	Preparing for Medication Administration	929
Skill 41.1	Preparing for Medication Administration	940
Chapter 42	Administering Oral, Topical, Instilled, and Parenteral Medications	952
Skill 42.1	Administering Oral Medications	955
Skill 42.2	Administering Topical Medications	963
Skill 42.3	Instilling Medications	968
Skill 42.4	Administering Parenteral Injections	985
Chapter 43	Administering Intravenous Medications	998
Skill 43.1	Administering Intravenous Medications	1003

Unit X WOUND THERAPY 1015

Chapter 44	Managing Wounds	1017
Skill 44.1	Applying Dressings	1028
Skill 44.2	Irrigating and Suctioning Wounds	1040
Skill 44.3	Removing Sutures or Staples	1046
Skill 44.4	Applying Bandages	1052
Skill 44.5	Applying a Binder	1059
Chapter 45	Applying Heat or Cold	1068
Skill 45.1	Applying Heat	1073
Skill 45.2	Applying Cold	1083
Chapter 46	Managing Decubitus Ulcers	1089
Skill 46.1	Managing the Decubitus Ulcer	1094

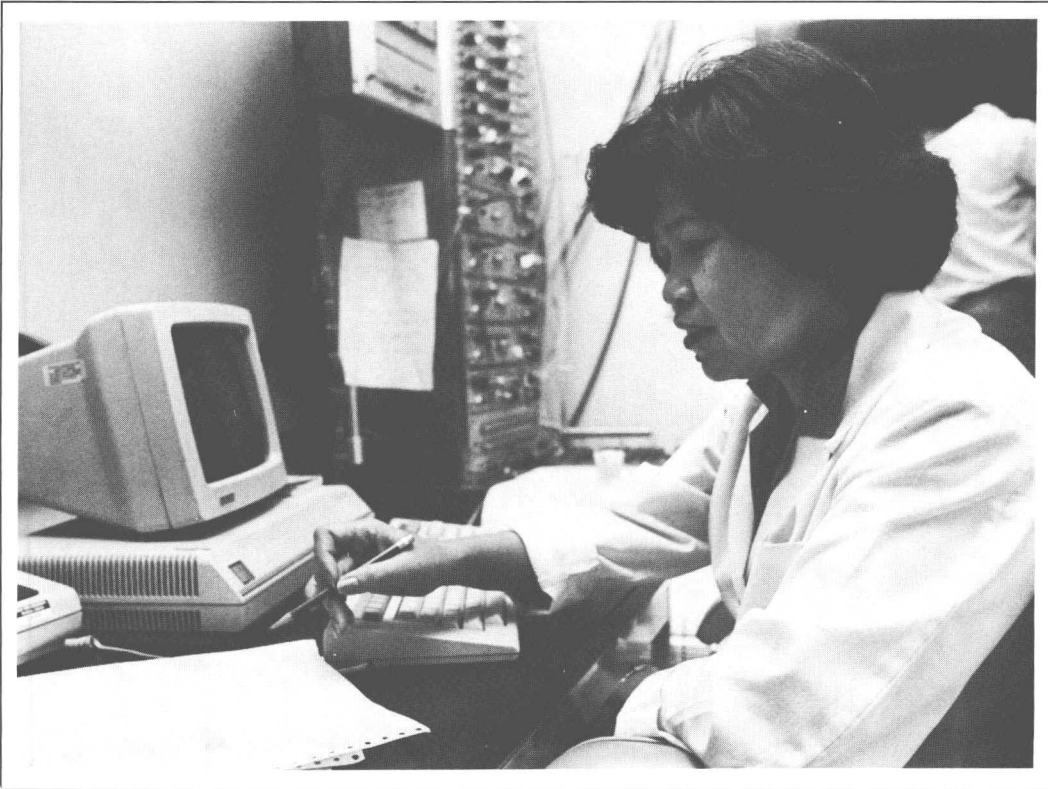
Unit XI MANAGEMENT OF THE SURGICAL CLIENT 1101

Chapter 47	Preparing the Client for Surgery	1103
Skill 47.1	Preparing the Client for Surgery	1112

Chapter 48	Managing the Postoperative Client	1125
Skill 48.1	Managing the Postoperative Client	1132
Unit XII	MANAGEMENT OF THE DYING CLIENT	1143
Chapter 49	Supporting the Dying Client and the Family	1145
Skill 49.1	Supporting the Dying Client	1151
Skill 49.2	Supporting Grieving	1158
Chapter 50	Providing Postmortem Care	1164
Skill 50.1	Providing Postmortem Care	1167
Unit XIII	SUPPORT OF MEDICAL DIAGNOSES AND THERAPIES	1175
Chapter 51	Collecting and Testing Specimens	1177
Skill 51.1	Collecting Cultures from the Nose or Throat	1180
Skill 51.2	Collecting Sputum Specimens	1185
Skill 51.3	Collecting and Testing Gastric Secretions	1189
Skill 51.4	Drawing and Testing Blood Specimens	1192
Skill 51.5	Collecting Wound Drainage Specimens	1199
Skill 51.6	Collecting and Testing Urine Specimens	1202
Skill 51.7	Collecting and Testing Stools	1209
Chapter 52	Assisting with Diagnostic Examinations or Procedures	1213
Skill 52.1	Preparing for and Assisting with the Pelvic Examination	1215
Skill 52.2	Preparing the Client for Electrophysiologic Tests	1219
Skill 52.3	Preparing and Managing the Client Having Radiologic Studies	1222
Skill 52.4	Assisting with a Tissue or Fluid Biopsy	1227
Skill 52.5	Assisting with Centesis	1234
Skill 52.6	Assisting with Direct Visualization Procedures	1241
Glossary		1247
Index		1271

UNIT I

FOUNDATIONS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE



The beginning student of nursing is bombarded with concepts and information concerning several academic disciplines usually melded together in a single course labeled “Fundamentals of Nursing.” Some of the information is familiar; other information is foreign. Often a new and strange language is used to describe the concepts or ideas that seem vague and unrelated to known, familiar experiences for the student. The sheer volume of information alone is staggering. Out of all these stimuli, the student must sort out and make sense of the confusing, sometimes seemingly unrelated pieces of information and wisdom called nursing. Such pursuit requires a framework to work within and a foundation to build upon.

This unit lays a foundation for building an understanding of nursing. Facts about nurses and nursing practice form an outline. The legal regulations and requirements of nursing give definition. The nursing process adds a framework