

Gerontological Nursing Certification Review Guide for the Generalist, Clinical Specialist, Nurse Practitioner

Revised Edition

**Catharine A. Kopac
Virginia Layng Millonig**

Health Leadership Associates, Inc.

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To my children,
Michael and Jennifer for their love and support,
and
in loving memory of the late Mary Ellen Pomorski Watson,
a friend, a colleague, a nurse

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Preface

The *Gerontological Nurse Certification Review Guide for the Generalist, Clinical Specialist and Nurse Practitioner* has been revised to reflect updates on statistical data as well as changes in trends of management and treatment for the gerontological client. An additional chapter has been added on eye, ear, and mouth disorders. It continues to be a comprehensive review of the unique knowledge nurses need, to practice in the specialized area of gerontology. It has been written for Health Leadership Associates, Inc., by experts in the field of gerontological nursing, to specifically assist in the preparation for the Generalist Gerontological Nurse, the Clinical Specialist in Gerontological Nursing and the Gerontological Nurse Practitioner examinations offered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). It is also intended to be used as a reference guide in the clinical setting.

The book is inclusive in that it contains both basic and advanced content. The basic information that is required of all nurses in any gerontological setting is designated with screens throughout the text with the exception of the chapters addressing test taking strategies, demography, and ethical and legal issues. The content in the test taking strategies chapter is essential information for all nurses taking certification examinations, the information provided in the chapters on demography and ethical and legal issues is foundation to gerontological nursing practice. The material that is not so designated with screens is for the advanced practitioner.

Many nurses preparing for the certification examinations find that reviewing an extensive body of scientific knowledge a very difficult search of numerous sources which must be synthesized to provide a review base for the examination. The purpose of this publication is to provide a succinct, yet comprehensive review of the core material.

This book is designed to be used by the generalist gerontological nurse, the gerontological clinical specialist and the gerontological nurse practitioner in preparation for their respective examinations.

The first chapter of the book on test taking introduces the reader to the entire process inherent in the examination process. Strategies and methods for answering various types of test questions and anxiety reduction techniques are addressed to assist the reader to become a more efficient and effective examinee.

The following sections of the book include an overview of nursing and the elderly with a chapter devoted to health assessment. System disorders comprise a major section of the book with attention placed on the response of the elderly client to various disorders. An entire chapter focuses on the various aspects of drug therapy and responses of the elderly to

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drugs. Professional issues and role functions in advanced practice are covered as are legal, ethical, organizational and health policy issues.

Following each chapter are test questions, which are intended to serve as an introduction to the testing arena. A comprehensive bibliography is included for those who need a more in depth discussion of the subject matter in each chapter. These references can serve as additional instructional material for the reader.

The editor and contributing authors are certified nurses and respected experts in the field of gerontology. They have designed this book to assist potential examinees to prepare for success in the certification examination process.

It is assumed the reader of this review guide has completed a course of study and has experience in the area of gerontology. The *Gerontological Nursing Certification Review Guide for the Generalist, Clinical Specialist and Nurse Practitioner* is not intended to be a basic learning tool.

Certification is a process that is gaining recognition both within and outside of the profession. For the professional it is a means of gaining special recognition as a certified gerontological nurse, clinical specialist or nurse practitioner, which not only demonstrates a level of competency, but may also enhance professional opportunities and advancement. For the consumer, it means that a certified gerontological nurse, clinical specialist, nurse practitioner has met certain predetermined standards set by the profession.

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Test Taking Strategies and Techniques

Nancy A. Dickenson-Hazard

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We all respond to testing situations in different ways. What separates the successful test taker from the unsuccessful one is knowing how to prepare for and take a test. Preparing yourself to be a successful test taker is as important as studying for the test. Each person needs to assess and develop their own test taking strategies and skills. The primary goal of this chapter is to assist potential examinees in knowing how to study for and take a test.

STRATEGY #1 Know Yourself

When faced with an examination, do you feel threatened, experience butterflies or sweaty palms, have trouble keeping your mind focused on studying or on the test question? These common symptoms of test anxiety plague many of us, but can be used advantageously if understood and handled correctly (Divine & Kylene, 1979). Over the years of test taking, each of us has developed certain testing behaviors, some of which are beneficial, while others present obstacles to successful test taking. You can take control of the test taking situation by identifying the undesirable behaviors, maintaining the desirable ones and developing skills to improve test performance.

Technique #1 From the following descriptions of test taking personalities, find yourself (Table 1). Write down those characteristics which describe you even if they are from different personality types. Carefully review the problem list associated with your test taking personality characteristics. Write down the problems which are most troublesome. Then make a list of how you can remedy these problems from the improvement strategies list. Be sure to use these strategies as you prepare for and take examinations.

STRATEGY #2 Develop Your Thinking Skills

Understanding Thought Processes: In order to improve your thinking skills and subsequent test performance, it is best to understand the types of thinking as well as the techniques to enhance the thought process.

Everyone has their own learning style, but we all must proceed through the same process to think.

Thinking occurs on two levels—the lower level of memory and comprehension and the higher level of application and analysis (ABP, 1989). Memory is the ability to recall facts. Without adequate retrieval of facts, progression through the higher levels of thinking can not occur easily. Comprehension is the ability to understand

memorized facts. To be effective, comprehension skills must allow the person to translate recalled information from one context to another. Application, or the process of using information to know why it occurs, is a higher form of learning. Effective application relies on the use of understood memorized facts to verify intended action. Analysis is the ability to use abstract or logical forms of thought to show relationships and to distinguish the cause and effect between the variables in a situation.

Table 1
Test Taker Profile

<i>Type</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Pitfalls</i>	<i>Improvement Strategies</i>
The Rusher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushes to complete the test before the studied facts are forgotten • Arrives at test site early and waits anxiously • Mumbles studied facts • Tense body posture • Accelerated pulse, respiration and neuromuscular excitement • Answers questions rapidly and is generally one of the first to complete • Experiences exhaustion once test is over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to read question and situation completely • At high risk for misreading, misinterpreting and mistakes • Difficult items heighten anxiety • Likely to make quick, not well-thought-out guesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice progressive relaxation techniques • Develop a study plan with sufficient time to review important content • Avoid cramming and last minute studying • Take practice tests focusing on slowing down and reading and answering each option carefully • Read instructions and questions slowly
The Turtle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves slowly, methodically, deliberately through each question • Repeated re-reading, underlining and checking • Takes 60 to 90 seconds per question versus an average of 45 to 60 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last to finish; often does not complete the exam • Has to quickly complete questions in last part of exam, increasing errors • Has difficulty completing timed examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take practice tests focusing on time spent per item • Place watch in front of examination paper to keep track of time • Mark answer sheet for where one should be halfway through exam based on total number of questions and total amount of time for exam • Study concepts not details • Attempt to answer each question as you progress through the exam