

CPNE®

Clinical Performance
in Nursing Examination

Study Guide

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21st Edition
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SUMMARY



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Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination

Summary Description

The Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination (CPNE®) is a 2½-day examination administered in a general hospital. It tests the student's ability to administer competent nursing care. The CPNE® includes a maximum of two nursing skills laboratories, three adult Patient Care Situations (PCSs), and two child PCSs. The faculty has carefully determined those nursing interventions (critical elements) that are essential for safe practice.

One examiner directly observes a student during all aspects of each skills lab station and PCS. Examiners are nurse educators, clinical managers, clinical nurse specialists, and nurse practitioners who have received special orientation for their role as examiner. Since this is a performance examination, examiners judge the student's actions according to the criteria specified in the study guide. Students will not be asked to explain their actions except as specified in the study guide. This examination focuses on the application of theory in patient care. Comprehension of theory is tested in written examinations, which must be successfully completed in order to be eligible to apply to take the CPNE®. Also demonstrating adequate knowledge application in the Focused Clinical Competencies Assessment® (FCCA®), a computerized program, is required before applying to take the CPNE®.

Critical elements are single, discrete, observable behaviors that must be performed to meet the standard of acceptability for the area of care or phase being tested. There are critical elements for the Planning Phase, Implementation Phase (the areas of care are included in this phase), Evaluation Phase, and for the Skills Laboratories.

There are three types of areas of care—Overriding, Required, and Selected. The Overriding Areas of Care include Asepsis, Emotional Jeopardy, Caring, and Physical Jeopardy. These overrides are in effect for each PCS and define safe and ethical care essential to nursing practice. The Required Areas of Care are Fluid Management, Mobility and Vital Signs; these areas of care are assigned for each PCS.

The Selected Areas of Care define the other possible competencies that the student may be required to perform during a PCS. Selected Areas of Care are chosen because of the clinical needs of the patient. The clinical examiner assigns three or four from the list of Selected Areas of Care. Therefore, each PCS assignment will include Overriding Areas of Care, Required Areas of Care, and three to four Selected Areas of Care.

There are a total of sixteen Selected Areas of Care: Abdominal Assessment, Comfort Management, Drainage and Specimen Collection, Enteral Feeding, Irrigation/Instillation, Neurological Assessment, Oxygen Management, Peripheral Neurovascular Assessment, Pain Management, Medications (this area of care must be successfully performed in at least one PCS during the CPNE®), Musculoskeletal Management, Patient Teaching, Respiratory Assessment, Respiratory Management, Skin Assessment, and Wound Management.

The following is an example of a **Selected Area of Care** and its related **critical elements**:

PERIPHERAL NEUROVASCULAR ASSESSMENT

The assessment of temperature, perfusion, pulse, sensation, and movement in patients with casts, traction, or peripheral vascular impairment. When possible, this assessment would include a comparison of extremities.

Critical Elements for Peripheral Neurovascular Assessment

The successful student:

1. Complies with established guidelines

2. Compares the extremities by all of the following methods:

- a. Palpating for the presence or absence of the most distal pulses
- b. Comparing the most distal corresponding palpable pulse(s)
- c. Assessing perfusion of extremity(ies) by:
 - 1) checking capillary refill
 - OR**
 - 2) observing color
- d. Assessing for temperature of extremity(ies)
- e. Eliciting the patient's response to tactile stimuli applied to the distal portion of the extremity(ies)
- f. Assessing motor function by:
 - 1) Asking the patient to move extremity(ies)
 - OR**
 - 2) Noting movement of the extremity(ies) in a child under 3 or a non-communicating adult

3. Records data related to bilateral comparison of extremities

- a. Presence or absence of the most distal pulses
- b. Comparison of most distal bilateral corresponding palpable pulses
- c. Capillary refill or color
- d. Temperature of extremity(ies)
- e. Response to tactile stimuli
- f. Motor function

Nursing Skills Laboratory Component

In the nursing skills laboratory portion of the CPNE®, the student prepares and administers intravenous and injectable medications as well as applies a sterile dressing. An examiner documents the performance of all aspects of each laboratory station using the critical elements specific to that the station.

The Patient Care Portion of the Examination

The student is required to meet the critical elements for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation of nursing care for a minimum of three and a maximum of five Patient Care Situation (PCS) attempts. Planning consists of writing a Plan of Nursing Care, which requires listing nursing diagnoses, validating assessment, expected outcomes, and nursing interventions. Only after the examiner accepts the Plan of Nursing Care, may the student begin to implement the PCS assignment required for that particular patient. (The student's evaluation of the care given is demonstrated by documentation of assessment findings, the care provided, patient responses, and revision of the Plan of Nursing Care.) The efficacy of the interventions are evaluated in relation to assisting the patient achieve a pre-established goal. The examiner reviews this information after the student has submitted a revision and/or has completed the PCS and has handed the documentation to the examiner.

When a student fails any critical element or his/her behavior violates any Overriding Area of Care, that PCS is terminated and documented as failed at that time. This degree of stringency is required for the protection of patients. To pass the CPNE®, students must pass two adult PCSs and one child PCS.

A sample schedule for the 2½-day examination is as follows:

Sample Examination Schedule

Day 1	4:15 – 7:30 PM	Orientation to the CPNE® Skills Laboratory 1
Day 2	7:30 AM – 2:00 PM	Patient Care Situations 1 and 2
	2:30 – 3:30 PM	Skills Laboratory 2 (if needed)
Day 3	7:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Patient Care Situations 3, 4, and 5 (4 and 5 as needed)

Eligibility and Administration

Enrolled associate degree nursing students who have completed all nursing theory exams, the Focused Clinical Competencies Assessment® (FCCA®), and 21 of the 31 required general education credits, are eligible to apply for the CPNE®.

The CPNE® is administered throughout the year by appointment only. It is given primarily on weekends (Friday–Sunday), although weekday sessions are periodically scheduled. Students who fail the CPNE® may repeat it, but only two more times. The examination study guide and the School of Nursing catalog outline the policy of limitations on taking performance examinations.

Test Centers and Fees

The CPNE® is administered at hospital test centers across the country. This can be changed for both editions. Students are required to make their own travel and lodging arrangements. Current fee information for all centers is available by request from Excelsior College.

Study Guide

The *CPNE® Study Guide* CD is sent to associate degree nursing students automatically upon meeting eligibility requirements. This guide is available free of charge to all enrolled students. The study guide specifies all policies and procedures pertaining to the CPNE® and includes references and suggested methods of preparation for the examination and the criteria for passing. Excelsior College provides additional learning resources on a fee for service basis; for example, a *CPNE® 1-Day Skills Workshop*, *CPNE® Preparation DVD and Interactive Workbook*, *CPNE® Flash Cards* or *Audio CD Flash Cards*, *Applying the Nursing Process Conference* and the *CPNE® Skills Conference* are available.

Students seeking RN licensure, and considering whether the Excelsior College associate degree nursing program is right for them, should use the assessment tool on the following page to help determine their ability to be successful with the CPNE®.

Several elements are necessary to ensure success with the CPNE®. First, the student must be experienced with nursing skills at the level of a beginning associate degree graduate nurse. Potential students should take some time to reflect on their comfort level performing each of these skills measured by the CPNE® by recording their skill level for each competency listed. For those areas described as “*Yes, but...*” and “*No way!*” students must decide whether obtaining assistance with skill improvement is realistic (“*Can I get help?*”) and, if so, write down the plan of action. This self-reflection will assist potential students in making a decision about whether Excelsior College is appropriate. Remember, Excelsior College does not provide clinical instruction.

Summary

COMPETENCY	I CAN DO THAT!	YES, BUT...	NO WAY!	CAN I GET HELP?
Medical asepsis (<i>including hand washing</i>)				
Surgical asepsis				
Mobilizing patients; use of mobility aids (<i>walkers, canes, wheelchairs</i>); transfer techniques				
Communication skills (<i>patients, family, staff</i>)				
Maintaining safety of patients (<i>physical and emotional</i>)				
Intake and output measurement				
IV therapy, including IV medication administration; use of infusion-control devices				
Measuring vital signs using variety of equipment (<i>tympanic, temporal or digital thermometers, electronic sphygmomanometers</i>)				
Tube feedings (<i>continuous on a pump, intermittent</i>)				
Bottle feeding				
Administering medications by all routes				
Irrigation/Instillation (<i>tubes, body orifices, maintaining an intermittent access device</i>)				
Applying and maintaining oxygen therapy, measuring oxygen saturation				
Maintaining drainage collection systems (<i>nasogastric, Foley, chest tube</i>)				
Obtaining specimens (<i>sputum, urine, stool</i>)				
Respiratory hygiene (<i>coughing and deep breathing exercises, incentive spirometry, chest percussion, suctioning</i>)				
Wound management (<i>dressing change, application of topical solutions and ointments</i>)				
Musculoskeletal management (<i>perform range of motion [ROM] and traction care; use supportive devices; assess extremity, abnormalities, and pain with motion</i>)				
Comfort and pain management (<i>mouth care, back rub, linen change, administer pain meds, distraction and relaxation techniques</i>)				
Assessments (<i>neurological, respiratory, abdominal, skin, peripheral neurovascular</i>)				
Patient teaching related to various patient learning needs				

In addition to possessing the skills listed on the preceding page, students should have sufficient clinical experience to be able to demonstrate sound clinical decision-making throughout a 2½ hour Patient Care Situation (PCS). Poor clinical judgment resulting in any unsafe action or omission in care that places the patient in physical jeopardy will result in a failure for that PCS.

Next, students must have an understanding and recall of each critical element as written in the *CPNE® Study Guide*. One omission or violation of a critical element will result in a failure of that PCS. Each critical element should be memorized so thoroughly that not even the stress of the exam will affect recall.

Stress management is also vital for success with the CPNE®. Students should know how to respond to general stress as well as additional stress created by participation in a nursing performance examination. Students must be able to positively intervene in order to stay focused on successful completion of the examination. This requires self-understanding and development of appropriate stress management techniques.

In summary, the Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination is an end-of-program, competency-based examination that assesses a wide range of skills appropriate for a graduate of an associate degree nursing program.

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