Test Content Outline  
Effective Date: April 5, 2011

Adult Health Clinical Nurse Specialist  
Board Certification Examination

There are 175 questions on this examination. Of these, 150 are scored questions and 25 are pretest questions that are not scored. Pretest questions are used to determine how well they will perform before placing them on the scored portion of the examination. Pretest questions cannot be distinguished from those that will be scored, so it is important for a candidate to answer all questions. A candidate's score, however, is based solely on the 150 scored questions. Performance on pretest questions does not affect a candidate’s score.

This Test Content Outline identifies the areas that are included on the examination. The percentage and number of questions in each of the major categories of the scored portion of the exam are also shown.

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Domains of Practice</th>
<th>No. of Questions</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Direct Care</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38.67%</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>Professional Practice</td>
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<td>III</td>
<td>System Leadership</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12.67%</td>
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<td>IV</td>
<td>Foundational Knowledge</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</table>
I. Direct Care (38.67%)
   A. Assessment and History
      Knowledge of:
      1. Assessment tools (e.g., pain, nutrition, depression, violence, caregiver burden)
      2. Risk assessment (e.g., genetics, anticipatory guidance)
      3. Metabolic requirements (e.g., diabetes, renal, cardiac)
      4. Atypical presentation of illness (e.g., acute myocardial infarction [AMI], depression, sepsis, delirium)

      Skills in:
      5. Obtaining comprehensive data from multiple sources about context and etiologies necessary to formulate differential diagnoses and plans of care
      6. Performing a comprehensive adult assessment across the lifespan (including functional, mental status, medication, environment, relative risk assessment, spiritual, nutritional status (e.g., body mass index [BMI], labs, dysphagia, support systems, etc.)
      7. Conducting a problem-focused assessment
      8. Accessing evidence-based assessment tools

   B. Diagnostic Reasoning
      Knowledge of:
      1. Disease progression/pathophysiology (e.g., geriatric syndromes, atypical presentation of illness, comorbidities, acute exacerbation of chronic illness)

      Skills in:
      2. Synthesizing assessment data to formulate diagnoses for clinical problems amendable to CNS interventions (e.g., patients, families, and systems; including environmental context)
      3. Prioritizing nursing and differential diagnoses
      4. Differentiating between age-related changes and disease
      5. Interpreting diagnostic data (e.g., imaging, labs, genetics)

   C. Interventions
      Knowledge of:
      1. Pharmacology (e.g., food/drug interactions, adverse drug events, and safe medication practice/systems)
      2. Psychoneuroimmunology (e.g., guided imagery, herbals, music therapy)
      3. Evidence-based practice, clinical practice guidelines, standards of care (e.g., skin, pain, glycemic control, hypertension)

      Skills in:
      4. Prescribing nursing therapeutics, non-pharmacologic interventions, diagnostic measures, equipment, procedures, and treatments
      5. Integrating complementary and integrative therapies into treatment plans (e.g., massage, herbals, music therapy)
      6. Individualizing plans of care considering unique/atypical physiology or developmental age-related needs (e.g., skin integrity, sexual functioning, functional status, end of life)
      7. Meeting nutritional needs of specific populations (considering culture, religion, personal preference, health status)
8. Incorporating evidence-based practice into individualized plans of care (e.g., standards of care, Cochrane Database, core measures, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ])

9. Integrating case management/coordination of care across the continuum (e.g., using pathways, care maps, benchmarks)

D. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Knowledge of:
1. Primary and secondary prevention strategies
2. Behavioral change theories (e.g., adherence, change, health belief model)

Skills in:
3. Facilitating patient and family health and wellness promotion and disease prevention based on risk assessment (e.g., tobacco cessation, behavioral counseling techniques)
4. Determining practice and system interventions that will promote patient, family, and community safety and wellness (e.g., immunization schedules, screenings, pap tests, infection control and prevention, education)

E. Outcomes Evaluation

Knowledge of:
1. Nursing-sensitive quality indicators

Skills in:
2. Comparing patient health outcomes with established benchmarks
3. Determining outcome criteria based on individualized patient need
4. Evaluating programs/innovative models of practice across the continuum of care
5. Evaluating and modifying the plan of care based on patient response

F. Advocacy

Knowledge of:
1. Teaching and learning theories
2. Financial and reimbursement influences on care (e.g., insured, underinsured, uninsured)
3. Health literacy
4. Caregiver needs (e.g., stress, respite, resource availability, knowledge, cultural, caregiver burden)

Skills in:
5. Fostering patient and families self-care abilities
6. Facilitating decision making (e.g., empowerment, prioritization, palliative care, end of life)
7. Coaching patient and family to navigate the health care system
8. Design health information and patient education appropriate to the patient’s developmental level, health literacy level, learning needs, readiness to learn, and cultural values and beliefs
9. Providing anticipatory guidance
10. Facilitating intra- and inter-agency communication
II. Professional Practice (16.67%)  
   A. Consultation/Collaboration  
   Knowledge of:  
   1. Interdisciplinary team roles and functions  
   2. Internal and external consulting  
   3. Stages of consultation  
   
   Skills in:  
   4. Establishing, improving, and sustaining collaborative relationships within and across departments, organizations, networks, and agencies  
   5. Facilitating interdisciplinary team processes to achieve outcomes (e.g., team building, negotiation, conflict management, practice improvement)  
   6. Providing consultation services for complex issues across the spheres of influence  
   7. Serving as a content expert (e.g., needs assessment, professional development, nursing orientation, and internship programs)  

   B. Coaching, Mentoring, Precepting, and Role Modeling  
   Knowledge of:  
   1. Comparison of coaching, precepting, mentoring, and role modeling  
   2. Adult learning principles  
   
   Skills in:  
   3. Functioning as a role model in the delivery of expert and compassionate nursing practice  
   4. Mentoring staff, students, health professionals, and others to acquire new knowledge and skills and career development  
   5. Providing feedback and evaluation  
   6. Coaching and skills development  

   C. Professional Accountability and Ethics  
   Knowledge of:  
   1. Scopes and standards of practice  
   2. Ethical principles (e.g., bioethics, codes of ethics, competency vs. capacity, consent/assent)  
   3. Moral distress  
   
   Skills in:  
   4. Using ethical frameworks for complex health care situations (e.g., allocation of resources, compacity, patient and family values and preferences, autonomy, clinical effectiveness, scientific advances, external influences)  
   5. Engaging resources to resolve issues related to moral distress and ethical conflict (e.g., activate ombudsman/ethics consult team, care conferences, chaplain)  
   6. Advocating for equitable patient care  
   7. Promoting a practice climate that analyzes the risks, benefits and outcomes of proposed health care regimen for target populations (e.g., informed consent, use of advanced directives, end of life, support decision making)
III. Systems Leadership (12.67%)

A. Process Improvement

Knowledge of:
1. Models and principles of quality improvement (e.g., Six Sigma, failure mode and effect analysis [FMEA], root cause analysis)
2. Program development (e.g., needs assessment, program evaluation)
3. Available resources for process improvement (e.g., Institute of Healthcare Improvement [IHI] bundles, national patient safety goals)

Skills in:
4. Evaluating practice that considers safety, timeliness, effectiveness, efficiency, and patient-centered care across all spheres of influence (e.g., data collection, data analysis, data trend identification, process structure outcome measures)
5. Comparing patient/client health outcomes with established benchmarks
6. Differentiating between outcomes that require care process modification at the individual patient level and those that require modification at the system level
7. Identifying practice improvement opportunities through data analysis and monitoring (across all spheres of influence)
8. Designing practice improvement based on system level assessment (including considering drivers and barriers (e.g., political, regulatory, financial, evidence-based practice, etc.)

B. Regulatory and Accreditation Standards

Knowledge of:
1. Organization accreditation standards (e.g., The Joint Commission, Magnet, Nurses Improving Care for Health System Elders [NICHE], Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities [CARF], Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [CMS])
2. Regulations and standards for the workplace (e.g., sexual harassment, workplace violence, equal employment opportunities)

Skills in:
3. Fostering a healthy work environment
4. Promoting compliance with regulatory, accrediting, and professional standards

C. Resource Management

Knowledge of:
1. Budgeting and financial principles (e.g., types of budgets, reimbursement, full-time equivalency [FTE], diagnosis related groups [DRG])

Skills in:
2. Recommending practice, product, and service modifications based on fiscal and budgetary implementations
3. Managing resources including human, financial, and information
4. Conducting cost/benefit analysis (e.g., clinical technologies, products, services)
5. Designing programs to improve efficacy and efficiency using business management principles (e.g., strategic plan, business plan, return on investment [ROI], deliverables, proposals)
IV. Foundational Knowledge (32.00%)  
   A. Research/Evidence-based Practice  
      Knowledge of:  
      1. Evidence-based practice principles (e.g., levels of evidence, PICO format)  
      2. Research process (including human subject protection, qualitative and quantitative  
         research, research utilization, and analysis)  
      Skills in:  
      3. Conducting a literature search (e.g., accessing databases, searching strategies  
         including keywords)  
      4. Analyzing research findings and other evidence for potential application to  
         clinical practice  
      5. Integrating evidence-based practice into new or existing policies and procedures of  
         care  
      6. Disseminating research findings  
      7. Interpreting statistical analysis  
      8. Evaluating the need for improvement or redesign of care delivery processes to  
         improve safety, efficiency, reliability, and quality  
      9. Fostering a culture of scientific inquiry across the spheres of influences (considering  
         barriers and facilitators)  
   B. Communications  
      Knowledge of:  
      1. Communication theories (e.g., active listening, motivational interviewing)  
      Skills in:  
      2. Resolving conflicts  
      3. Establishing and maintaining therapeutic relationships (e.g., identification of  
         appropriate and inappropriate therapeutic relationships, designing programs to  
         promote the establishment of appropriate therapeutic relationships)  
      4. Communicating information through formal and informal presentations and  
         publications (e.g., community groups, websites, professional organization meetings)  
      5. Evaluating the effectiveness of communications across the spheres of influence (e.g.,  
         with patients, health care providers, interdisciplinary teams, community)  
      6. Communicating within multimedia modalities (e.g., teleconferencing, computer-  
         based technologies [internet, intranet], brochures)  
   C. Nursing and Other Theories Related to CNS Practice  
      Skills in:  
      1. Applying theory to practice (e.g., nursing, family, role, psychosocial,  
         leadership/management, risk management, quality improvement)  
      2. Applying theory to program development (e.g., nursing, family, role, psychosocial,  
         leadership/management, risk management, quality improvement)
D. Cultural Competence (e.g., culture, ethnicity, spirituality, sexuality, linguistic)

Knowledge of:
1. Community resources associated with meeting diverse cultural needs
2. Cultural influences on patient’s health and health behaviors

Skills in:
3. Conducting an in-depth cultural needs assessment
4. Facilitating care for culturally diverse individuals and communities

Last Updated: 11/4/2009