Preparation for the CNL Examination

CLINICAL NURSE LEADER PROJECT
CHRISTINE E. LYNN COLLEGE OF NURSING
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

General Approach to Studying

- Review the CNL Exam Content Outline
- Know that questions must be supported in literature
- Read AACN's Competencies & Curricular Expectations for Clinical Nurse Leader Education and Practice.
- Review any terms or concepts that may not be familiar to you.
- Try the practice exam: CNL Self-Assessment Exam
- Always "think like a CNL" when answering the questions
- Review basic terminology from your course

Mental Preparation

- See the exam as a challenge, even a pleasant one
- Don't panic if you don't know the answer
- Approach with an attitude of confidence, not fear
- Trust your knowledge and preparation
- Make sure you have eaten before taking the exam
- Research is now showing if you spend 10 minutes prior to entering an exam writing down your worst fears about the exam – you actually enter with more confidence as you have confronted your stress.

Taking the Test

- Breathe deeply and collect your energy in the space
- Read stems carefully before distractors
  - Answer the question for yourself before proceeding
  - Consider elements that relate to the question as asked
  - Only then read the distractors

The Test

- 140 Multiple Choice Questions – 10 are trial questions and 130 count. Recall, Application and Analysis
- You have 3 hours to complete the exam
- Four choices for each question – no points off for wrong answer
- Read stem carefully – think about how you would approach this as a **CNL and not as a staff nurse**
- You will probably be able to easily eliminate 1-2
- Look for the answer that stands out
- When in doubt choose the longest answer
- If nothing falls into place, re-read the question

Information Gathering

- Read all responses
- Consider elements of the set-up and use only the data you need to make a decision
- Less is usually more in this case as you are penalized for selecting too much or too little data

Avoiding Diagnostic Error

- Do not use a shotgun approach to data collection
  - **Points deducted** for requesting unnecessary information
  - In real life this approach does not improve accuracy of diagnosis
- Refine your diagnostic hypothesis list
  - "Rule in:" data that confirms a choice
  - "Rule out:" data that shows a possibility is not true
- Each piece of data may change the priority order of your hypotheses
- Don't settle on your choice too soon

Decision Making

- Consider the highest risk diagnosis
  - Preserving life
  - Preserving function
- Consider priorities of your guidelines for CNL practice
- Some scenarios will guide you to select only one response and others will be as many as are appropriate.

Good Advice

- Monitor your energy and emotional state as you proceed
- Take a minibreak periodically
- Your test results are emailed to you immediately after you finish the test.

Trust Yourself!