SDC for Getting Ready for Certification “Critical Thinking WOCNCB APN Exam”

(Leanne Richbourg MSN, APRN-BC, CWON-AP, GCNS-BC, Duke University Hospital  
Durham, NC)

In nursing, critical thinking skills have long been lauded as the key to successful outcomes for patients. A landmark study published over a decade ago defines the concept of critical thinking with this consensus statement: “*Critical thinking in nursing is an essential component of professional accountability and quality nursing care. Critical thinkers in nursing exhibit these habits of the mind: confidence, contextual perspective, creativity, flexibility, inquisitiveness, intellectual integrity, intuition, open-mindedness, perseverance, and reflection. Critical thinkers in nursing practice manifest the cognitive skills of analyzing, logical reasoning, predicting and transforming knowledge (*Scheffer & Rubenfeld 2000, p*.* 357*).”*

The cognitive skills of critical thinking are best understood by considering the following definitions:

* *Analyzing*: separating or breaking a whole into parts to discover its nature, function and relationships.
* *Applying standards*: judging according to established personal, professional or social rules or criteria.
* *Discriminating*: recognizing differences and similarities among things or situations and distinguishing carefully in order to categorize or rank.
* *Information seeking*: searching for evidence, facts or knowledge by identifying relevant sources and gathering objective, subjective, historical, and current data from those sources.
* *Logical reasoning*: drawing inferences or conclusions that are supported in or justified by evidence.
* *Predicting*: envisioning a plan and its consequences.
* *Transforming knowledge*: changing or converting the condition, nature, form, or function of concepts among contexts. (Scheffer & Rubenfeld 2000, p. 358)

Success on WOCNCB certification exams requires the test taker to not only utilize critical thinking but also *clinical* *thinking*: collecting clinical data, interpreting it correctly, making judgments based on solid theoretical knowledge, devising an appropriate plan of care, and evaluating the outcomes (Tanner, 2005). On each WOCNCB certification exam there are a percentage of testing items that require a high level of clinical critical thinking, these are classified as analysis questions. The Advanced Practice WOC certification examination has a higher percentage of analysis items than the other certification exams. The questions included here are a sampling of advanced practice analysis questions.

References:

Scheffer BK & Rubenfeld MG. A consensus statement on critical thinking in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*. 2000; 39(8):352-359.

Tanner CA. What have we learned about critical thinking in nursing? *Journal of Nursing Education*. 2005; 44(2):47-48.