

Summary Chart

Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Exam Development Guidelines

Structural Variables			
Exam Length and Format	Approximately 165 objective questions (e.g., multiple-choice)		
Question Presentation	40-50% independent questions 50-60% case-based questions		
Cognitive Ability Levels of Questions	Knowledge/Comprehension	14-23% of questions	
	Application	25-35% of questions	
	Critical Thinking	44-54% of questions	
Competency Categories	Therapeutic Relationships	8-12% of questions	
	Safety	10-15% of questions	
	Clients with Anxiety	8-12% of questions	
	Clients with Psychosis	8-12% of questions	
	Clients with Alterations in Mood	8-12% of questions	
	Clients Experiencing Crisis and/or Loss	4-8% of questions	
	Clients with Alterations in Cognition	4-8% of questions	
	Clients with Disturbances in Personality	1-5% of questions	
	Clients with Addictive Behaviours	4-8% of questions	
	Clients with Eating Disturbances	4-8% of questions	
	Clients with Alterations in Attention, Learning and Development	1-5% of questions	
	Psychopharmacology	8-12% of questions	
Contextual Variables			
Client Age and Gender		Male	Female
	0 to 18 years	3-7%	3-7%
	19 to 64 years	30-40%	30-40%
	65+ years	7-13%	7-13%
Client Culture	Questions are included that measure awareness, sensitivity and respect for different cultural values, beliefs and practices, without introducing stereotypes.		
Client Health Situation	In the development of the Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Exam, the client is viewed holistically. The client health situations presented reflect a cross-section of mental health problems and mental disturbances.		
Health-Care Environment	It is recognized that psychiatric/mental health nursing is practised in a variety of settings. For the purposes of this exam, the health-care environment is specified only when it is required for clarity or in order to provide guidance to the examinee.		

The Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Exam List of Competencies

Therapeutic Relationships

The psychiatric/mental health nurse:

- 1.1 understands the principles/concepts/dimensions underlying the therapeutic relationship (e.g., knowledge of the client, rapport, trust, respect, genuineness, empathy, unconditional acceptance).
- 1.2 establishes and maintains a therapeutic relationship using a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- 1.3 identifies values and beliefs and their impact on the therapeutic relationship.
- 1.4 recognizes transference/counter-transference and its impact on the therapeutic relationship.
- 1.5 recognizes the impact of the dynamics of the interdisciplinary team on the therapeutic relationship.
- 1.6 recognizes the impact of the involvement of various agencies on the therapeutic relationship.
- 1.7 recognizes the dynamic flow of the phases of the therapeutic relationship.
- 1.8 assesses the influence of the therapeutic relationship on the following:
 - 1.8a family dynamics;
 - 1.8b group dynamics; and
 - 1.8c milieu/environment.
- 1.9 establishes boundaries for the therapeutic relationship.
- 1.10 selects appropriate interventions for the initial phase of the therapeutic relationship:
 - 1.10a develops goals with the client; and
 - 1.10b discusses confidentiality.
- 1.11 selects appropriate interventions for the working phase of the therapeutic relationship:
 - 1.11a identifies the client's strengths and resources;
 - 1.11b promotes coping strategies and problem-solving;
 - 1.11c responds appropriately to issues generated by transference and counter-transference; and
 - 1.11d evaluates therapeutic goals.

- 1.12 selects appropriate interventions for the termination phase of the therapeutic relationship:
 - 1.12a prepares for transitions; and
 - 1.12b promotes continuity of care.

Safety

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 2.1 recognizes significant safety risk factors with a vulnerable population (e.g., client, client history, environment).
- 2.2 identifies changes in the client's mental status that indicate safety risk factors to client, nurse and others.
- 2.3 recognizes the impact of aggressive and abusive behaviours (e.g., on client, nurse, family, community).
- 2.4 selects the appropriate nursing intervention to deal with clients experiencing the following:
 - 2.4a suicidal ideation or behaviour;
 - 2.4b self-harm;
 - 2.4c self-neglect;
 - 2.4d homicidal ideation or behaviour;
 - 2.4e aggressive behaviour (e.g., toward objects or others);
 - 2.4f abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, verbal, neglect);
 - 2.4g assault (sexual, physical); and
 - 2.4h water intoxication.
- 2.5 selects the appropriate nursing intervention to ensure client safety, such as:
 - 2.5a engaging with the client;
 - 2.5b collaborating in a safety assessment;
 - 2.5c implementing observation levels;
 - 2.5d modifying the environment;
 - 2.5e managing agitation;
 - 2.5f managing aggression;
 - 2.5g using support systems;
 - 2.5h implementing elopement precautions;

- 2.5i administering medication;
- 2.5j using seclusion; and
- 2.5k using restraints.

Clients with Anxiety

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 3.1 identifies level of anxiety, i.e. mild, moderate, severe and panic.
- 3.2 recognizes disturbances in thinking, perceiving, communicating and decision-making abilities related to anxiety.
- 3.3 recognizes physiological, behavioural, emotional, social and cognitive manifestations of:
 - 3.3a generalized anxiety;
 - 3.3b phobias;
 - 3.3c obsessive-compulsive behaviours;
 - 3.3d acute stress response;
 - 3.3e chronic stress response;
 - 3.3f panic;
 - 3.3g post-traumatic stress; and
 - 3.3h substance-induced anxiety.
- 3.4 selects the appropriate nursing intervention for clients with anxiety, based on:
 - 3.4a coping strategies and resources;
 - 3.4b impact of anxiety on the ability to manage physiological response;
 - 3.4c problem-solving ability;
 - 3.4d impact of anxiety on activities of daily living;
 - 3.4e impact of anxiety on interactions with others; and
 - 3.4f the environment.
- 3.5 selects the appropriate nursing intervention to assist clients with the management of anxiety.
- 3.6 assesses the impact of the following contextual factors on the interventions for clients with anxiety:
 - 3.6a understanding of the condition;
 - 3.6b response to previous interventions and care;

- 3.6c culture;
- 3.6d access to care; and
- 3.6e substance use.

Clients with Psychosis

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 4.1 recognizes disturbances in clients with psychosis in the following areas:
 - 4.1a behaviour;
 - 4.1b thinking and perceiving (processes and content);
 - 4.1c communication;
 - 4.1d activities of daily living;
 - 4.1e affect; and
 - 4.1f family and social relationships.
- 4.2 assesses the impact of the following contextual factors on the intervention for clients with psychosis:
 - 4.2a understanding of the condition;
 - 4.2b response to previous interventions and care;
 - 4.2c culture;
 - 4.2d access to care; and
 - 4.2e substance use.
- 4.3 selects appropriate interventions with clients with psychosis.
- 4.4 implements appropriate health promotion, rehabilitation, relapse prevention and recovery strategies with clients with psychosis.

Clients with Alterations in Mood

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 5.1 recognizes alterations in mood, such as:
 - 5.1a depression;
 - 5.1b hypomania/mania.

- 5.2 recognizes changes that occur in clients with alterations in mood in the following:
 - 5.2a affect;
 - 5.2b sleep;
 - 5.2c activity and energy level;
 - 5.2d elimination;
 - 5.2e weight gain/loss;
 - 5.2f mood;
 - 5.2g self-concept;
 - 5.2h thinking/perceiving;
 - 5.2i decision-making;
 - 5.2j communicating;
 - 5.2k social interaction;
 - 5.2l relationships; and
 - 5.2m sexuality.
- 5.3 assesses the impact of the following contextual factors on the intervention for clients with alterations in mood:
 - 5.3a understanding of the condition;
 - 5.3b response to previous interventions and care;
 - 5.3c culture;
 - 5.3d access to care; and
 - 5.3e substance use.
- 5.4 selects appropriate intervention for clients with alterations in mood.
- 5.5 implements appropriate health promotion, rehabilitation, relapse prevention and recovery strategies with clients with alterations in mood.
- 5.6 understands the principles of electroconvulsive therapy.

Clients Experiencing Crisis or Loss

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 6.1 understands the concept of crisis, crisis theory, crisis intervention, loss and grief.
- 6.2 recognizes behaviours indicative of clients experiencing crisis or loss.
- 6.3 identifies the type of crisis and/or loss:
 - 6.3a developmental;
 - 6.3b situational; and
 - 6.3c catastrophic.
- 6.4 selects appropriate intervention for clients experiencing crisis or loss based on:
 - 6.4a the client's perception of the situation;
 - 6.4b situational supports; and
 - 6.4c the client's personal coping skills and resources.
- 6.5 selects appropriate intervention for dealing with the impact of catastrophic events on:
 - 6.5a individuals;
 - 6.5b families; and
 - 6.5c community.
- 6.6 identifies the normal grieving process.
- 6.7 selects the appropriate intervention to assist clients with unresolved grieving.

Clients with Alterations in Cognition

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 7.1 recognizes alterations in cognition (e.g., delirium, dementia, head injury) within the following domains:
 - 7.1a onset;
 - 7.1b duration/course;
 - 7.1c reversibility;
 - 7.1d extent of cognitive impairment;

- 7.1e activity/behaviour;
- 7.1f speech and language;
- 7.1g mood/affect; and
- 7.1h thinking/perceiving.
- 7.2 differentiates between delirium, dementia and depression.
- 7.3 selects appropriate interventions with clients with cognitive disturbances, such as:
 - 7.3a delirium;
 - 7.3b dementia; and
 - 7.3c head injury.
- 7.4 assesses the impact of the following contextual factors on the intervention for clients with alterations in cognition:
 - 7.4a understanding of the condition;
 - 7.4b response to previous interventions and care;
 - 7.4c culture;
 - 7.4d access to care; and
 - 7.4e substance use.
- 7.5 selects appropriate interventions for clients experiencing alterations in cognition.
- 7.6 implements appropriate health promotion, rehabilitation, relapse prevention and recovery strategies with clients with alterations in cognition.

Clients with Disturbances in Personality

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with client:

- 8.1 identifies the characteristics of clients with different types of personality disturbances.
- 8.2 recognizes manifestations of misuse of defence mechanisms.
- 8.3 selects consistent and appropriate nursing interventions for clients who have difficulties in:
 - 8.3a relationships and boundaries;
 - 8.3b self-concept;
 - 8.3c impulse control;

- 8.3d affective stability;
- 8.3e cognition; and
- 8.3f vocational/educational functioning.
- 8.4 implements milieu management (e.g., limit setting, environmental modifications).
- 8.5 implements appropriate health promotion, rehabilitation, relapse prevention and recovery strategies with clients with personality disturbances.

Clients with Addictive Behaviours

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 9.1 recognizes the manifestations and impact of the coexistence of addictive behaviours and alterations in mental health.
- 9.2 understands the common types of addiction:
 - 9.2a substances (alcohol, drugs and medication);
 - 9.2b gambling;
 - 9.2c Internet use; and
 - 9.2d sex.
- 9.3 identifies predisposing factors and precipitating stressors of addictive behaviours.
- 9.4 recognizes the impact of addictive behaviours on the:
 - 9.4a individual;
 - 9.4b family; and
 - 9.4c community/environment.
- 9.5 selects the appropriate nursing intervention with clients experiencing:
 - 9.5a acute intoxication; and
 - 9.5b withdrawal.
- 9.6 implements appropriate health promotion, harm reduction, rehabilitation, relapse prevention and recovery strategies with clients with addictive behaviours.

Clients with Eating Disturbances

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 10.1 recognizes the impact of the coexistence of eating disturbances and alterations in mental health.
- 10.2 identifies behaviours that indicate eating disturbances:
 - 10.2a anorexia nervosa;
 - 10.2b bulimia;
 - 10.2c overeating, compulsive overeating and/or morbid obesity;
 - 10.2d pica; and
 - 10.2e Prader-Willi syndrome.
- 10.3 recognizes the behaviours, psychological status and physiological status of clients experiencing eating disturbances.
- 10.4 selects appropriate nursing interventions for clients experiencing eating disturbances.
- 10.5 assesses the impact of the following contextual factors on the intervention for clients with eating disturbances:
 - 10.5a understanding of the condition;
 - 10.5b response to previous interventions and care;
 - 10.5c culture; and
 - 10.5d access to care.
- 10.6 implements appropriate health promotion, rehabilitation, relapse prevention and recovery strategies with clients with eating disturbances.

Clients with Alterations in Attention, Learning and Development

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 11.1 recognizes the manifestations of attention, learning and developmental disturbances across the lifespan (e.g., attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome).
- 11.2 recognizes the impact of attention, learning and developmental disturbances on:
 - 11.2a client;
 - 11.2b family and social relationships;

- 11.2c community; and
- 11.2d vocational/educational functioning.
- 11.3 assesses the impact of the following contextual factors on the intervention for clients with alterations in attention, learning and development:
 - 11.3a understanding of the condition;
 - 11.3b response to previous interventions and care;
 - 11.3c culture; and
 - 11.3d access to care.
- 11.4 selects appropriate interventions for clients with alterations in attention, learning and development.
- 11.5 implements appropriate health promotion for clients with alterations in attention, learning and development.

Psychopharmacology

The psychiatric/mental health nurse, in collaboration with the client:

- 12.1 understands the indications for psychotropic medication administration and monitoring as related to:
 - 12.1a attitudes and beliefs about medication;
 - 12.1b age, gender and culture;
 - 12.1c therapeutic response;
 - 12.1d side-effects;
 - 12.1e adverse effects/toxicities;
 - 12.1f paradoxical responses;
 - 12.1g incompatibilities and interactions between medications and other substances;
 - 12.1h p.r.n. medications;
 - 12.1i impact of costs;
 - 12.1j adherence; and
 - 12.1k routes of administration.
- 12.2 initiates health teaching related to psychotropic medication.
- 12.3 administers psychotropic medication accurately and safely.

- 12.4 selects appropriate interventions for side-effects and toxicity, such as:
 - 12.4a anticholinergic effects;
 - 12.4b neurological changes (e.g., extra-pyramidal symptoms);
 - 12.4c dermatological changes;
 - 12.4d ophthalmologic changes;
 - 12.4e cognitive changes (e.g., over-sedation, agitation, confusion);
 - 12.4f sexual dysfunction;
 - 12.4g appetite/changes in weight;
 - 12.4h endocrine changes;
 - 12.4i cardiovascular changes;
 - 12.4j hepatic changes;
 - 12.4k hematological changes;
 - 12.4l neuroleptic malignant syndrome; and
 - 12.4m serotonin syndrome.

Bibliography

Note: All references are important but bolded references were chosen by members of the Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Examination Committee as “key references” for nurses preparing for the psychiatric/mental health nursing certification examination.

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