

# Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) Practice Exam (Sample)

## Study Guide



**Everything you need from our exam experts!**

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# Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

# How to Use This Guide

**This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:**

## 1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

**Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.**

## 2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

**Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.**

## 3. Learn from the Explanations

**After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.**

## 4. Track Your Progress

**Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.**

## 5. Simulate the Real Exam

**Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.**

## 6. Repeat and Review

**Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.**

**There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!**

## **Questions**

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- 1. Which of the following statements about living wills is least accurate?**
  - A. A living will must be written.**
  - B. A living will is made by a competent adult to make known his or her wishes regarding care in terminal illness.**
  - C. A living will may be revoked under certain circumstances.**
  - D. Living wills are always legally binding.**
- 2. For what purpose might a CNS involve themselves in staff mentoring processes?**
  - A. To conduct performance evaluations**
  - B. To provide technical assistance**
  - C. To offer general career guidance**
  - D. To administer disciplinary actions**
- 3. Which lipid abnormalities are associated with chronic renal insufficiency?**
  - A. Elevated total cholesterol and triglycerides**
  - B. Low HDL**
  - C. Elevated triglycerides, HDL and LDL**
  - D. Elevated total cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL**
- 4. Which source of power is considered legitimate in a leadership context?**
  - A. Reward power**
  - B. Expert power**
  - C. Referent power**
  - D. Coercive power**
- 5. The decision path that a practitioner might take during a particular episode of care is called what?**
  - A. Clinical pathway**
  - B. Critical pathway**
  - C. Clinical protocol**
  - D. Quality protocol**

**6. An opaque grayish ring at the corneal edge in an older patient is characteristic of which condition?**

- A. Cataracts**
- B. Macular degeneration**
- C. Presbyopia**
- D. Arcus senilis**

**7. Which of the following is NOT one of the four cardinal features indicating Parkinson disease?**

- A. Tremor at Rest**
- B. Postural Instability**
- C. Exaggerated Postural Reflexes**
- D. Rigidity**

**8. For patients unable to take medication, which therapeutic option provides relief from depressive symptoms?**

- A. Light therapy.**
- B. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.**
- C. Herbal supplements.**
- D. Electroconvulsive therapy.**

**9. When a patient discusses his job-related stresses and you ask him to elaborate, what therapeutic technique are you using?**

- A. Clarifying**
- B. Acknowledging**
- C. Focusing**
- D. Reflection**

**10. Which of the following entities is most likely to write clinical guidelines?**

- A. State legislature**
- B. DEA**
- C. Specialty organizations like the American Heart Association or American Cancer Society**
- D. DHH**

## **Answers**

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1. D
2. C
3. A
4. A
5. C
6. D
7. C
8. D
9. C
10. C

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## **Explanations**

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**1. Which of the following statements about living wills is least accurate?**

- A. A living will must be written.**
- B. A living will is made by a competent adult to make known his or her wishes regarding care in terminal illness.**
- C. A living will may be revoked under certain circumstances.**
- D. Living wills are always legally binding.**

A living will is a legal document that allows individuals to express their preferences for medical treatment in situations where they may not be able to communicate their wishes, particularly in the context of terminal illness or serious medical conditions. The statement that living wills are always legally binding is the least accurate because, while living wills are designed to guide healthcare providers in accordance with a patient's wishes, their enforceability can vary depending on jurisdiction. Some states may not recognize certain forms of living wills, or they may require specific language or procedures to be followed for them to be legally valid. Additionally, living wills can be challenged in court, rendering them not universally binding in every situation. In contrast, the other statements accurately reflect the nature of living wills. They must be written documents to be valid, are created by competent adults to express specific healthcare preferences, and can typically be revoked by the individual at any time, ensuring that their wishes can change as circumstances evolve.

**2. For what purpose might a CNS involve themselves in staff mentoring processes?**

- A. To conduct performance evaluations**
- B. To provide technical assistance**
- C. To offer general career guidance**
- D. To administer disciplinary actions**

The role of a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in staff mentoring processes primarily revolves around offering general career guidance. This involves helping nurses identify their strengths and areas for growth, providing insights into career advancement opportunities, and supporting their professional development. A CNS can assist staff in setting career goals, understanding necessary competencies, and navigating the complexities of the nursing profession. Through mentorship, a CNS fosters a culture of learning and empowerment, enabling nurses to enhance their clinical skills and leadership abilities. This guidance is essential for cultivating a motivated workforce that can provide high-quality patient care and adapt to the ever-evolving healthcare landscape. Ultimately, by focusing on career guidance, the CNS contributes to both individual nurse satisfaction and organizational success.

**3. Which lipid abnormalities are associated with chronic renal insufficiency?**

- A. Elevated total cholesterol and triglycerides**
- B. Low HDL**
- C. Elevated triglycerides, HDL and LDL**
- D. Elevated total cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL**

Chronic renal insufficiency significantly impacts lipid metabolism, leading to specific changes in lipid profiles. A key characteristic of this condition is the elevation of total cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood. The kidneys play a crucial role in lipid metabolism, and with their impaired function, there can be an accumulation of these lipid components. This is primarily due to increased hepatic production of lipoproteins, particularly LDL, and the decreased clearance of triglyceride-rich lipoproteins. In the context of chronic kidney disease, it is not uncommon for patients to present with dyslipidemia characterized by hypertriglyceridemia, which contributes to elevated total cholesterol levels. This dyslipidemic state is partially attributed to insulin resistance that commonly occurs in patients with renal impairment. While variations in HDL levels can occur, the prominent abnormalities typically seen with chronic renal insufficiency include elevated total cholesterol and triglycerides, positioning these factors as critical indicators in managing patients with renal difficulties. Understanding these changes is vital for addressing cardiovascular risks, which are elevated in individuals with chronic renal disease.

**4. Which source of power is considered legitimate in a leadership context?**

- A. Reward power**
- B. Expert power**
- C. Referent power**
- D. Coercive power**

In a leadership context, the concept of legitimate power refers to the authority granted to an individual based on their position within an organization. This power derives from the perception that the leader has the right to make demands and expect compliance from subordinates. Reward power is associated with the leader's ability to provide rewards or incentives to team members. This source of power is often viewed as legitimate because it is tied to the leader's role and their ability to influence through positive reinforcement, such as promotions, bonuses, or other forms of recognition. Leaders who utilize reward power can establish a sense of legitimacy because their authority aligns with organizational structures and roles. Followers typically recognize and accept the leader's ability to provide rewards as part of their legitimate power. This acceptance can be vital for maintaining morale and motivation within the team, creating an environment where team members feel valued and incentivized to perform well. Other forms of power, such as expert power and referent power, are also significant in leadership but do not necessarily convey a positional authority that is widely recognized. Coercive power, while it can exert influence, tends to be viewed more negatively, as it is based on the ability to punish or control through fear, having less emphasis on legitimacy.

**5. The decision path that a practitioner might take during a particular episode of care is called what?**

- A. Clinical pathway**
- B. Critical pathway**
- C. Clinical protocol**
- D. Quality protocol**

The term that best describes the decision path a practitioner might take during a particular episode of care is "clinical protocol." Clinical protocols are systematically developed sets of rules or guidelines that outline the procedures and interventions to be followed in specific clinical situations. They are designed to standardize care, ensure consistency, and promote best practices among healthcare providers. Clinical protocols typically encompass various elements, such as assessment guidelines, treatment options, and protocols for monitoring and follow-up care. They are often evidence-based and are intended to achieve optimal patient outcomes while minimizing variations in care. This makes them essential in guiding practitioners' decision-making during patient care episodes. In contrast, "clinical pathways" and "critical pathways" generally refer to multidisciplinary plans designed to guide the expected course of treatment for patients with specific conditions over a defined time frame. These pathways focus more on the timing and sequence of interventions rather than providing a prescriptive path for decision-making in a particular scenario. "Quality protocol" is not a standard term commonly used to define a specific decision path within clinical care, making "clinical protocol" the most fitting choice.

**6. An opaque grayish ring at the corneal edge in an older patient is characteristic of which condition?**

- A. Cataracts**
- B. Macular degeneration**
- C. Presbyopia**
- D. Arcus senilis**

The presence of an opaque grayish ring at the edge of the cornea in an older patient is primarily indicative of arcus senilis. This condition occurs due to the deposition of lipid materials in the corneal stroma and is commonly seen in older adults as a normal aging change. While it can occasionally be associated with hyperlipidemia in younger individuals, its appearance in older individuals is typically benign and often just a sign of aging, not a disease. Cataracts, on the other hand, would present with clouding of the lens leading to blurred vision, while macular degeneration affects the central part of the retina and can result in vision loss but does not produce a visible ring around the cornea. Presbyopia, a condition related to aging vision that affects the ability to focus on close objects, does not have a physical manifestation like a ring, and is more about refractive changes. Therefore, arcus senilis is the most accurate answer for describing this specific ocular finding in older patients.

**7. Which of the following is NOT one of the four cardinal features indicating Parkinson disease?**

- A. Tremor at Rest**
- B. Postural Instability**
- C. Exaggerated Postural Reflexes**
- D. Rigidity**

The four cardinal features indicating Parkinson's disease are recognized as tremor at rest, rigidity, bradykinesia (slowness of movement), and postural instability. Each of these signs plays a significant role in the clinical diagnosis of the condition. While exaggerated postural reflexes can be seen in other neurological disorders, they are not a characteristic feature of Parkinson's disease. In fact, individuals with Parkinson's often exhibit impaired postural reflexes, leading to an increased risk of falls and instability. This distinction is crucial in understanding the clinical manifestation of the disease. In summary, exaggerated postural reflexes do not belong to the hallmark symptoms of Parkinson's disease, making that choice the correct answer. Understanding these cardinal features is essential for healthcare professionals in diagnosing and managing the disease effectively.

**8. For patients unable to take medication, which therapeutic option provides relief from depressive symptoms?**

- A. Light therapy.**
- B. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.**
- C. Herbal supplements.**
- D. Electroconvulsive therapy.**

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a highly effective treatment option for individuals who cannot take medications due to various reasons, such as severe side effects or contraindications with other health conditions. ECT involves the application of electrical currents to the brain, which induces a controlled seizure and can lead to significant improvements in depressive symptoms, particularly in cases of major depressive disorder, treatment-resistant depression, or depression with psychotic features. This therapeutic approach has a well-established efficacy, especially for severe depression where rapid intervention is needed. ECT can lead to quick symptom relief compared to traditional antidepressant medications, which often take weeks to start working. Additionally, ECT is considered safe for many patients, including those with comorbidities that might complicate pharmacotherapy. Other options, while potentially beneficial in certain contexts, do not demonstrate the same level of efficacy or appropriateness for all patients unable to take medication. For instance, light therapy is typically used for seasonal affective disorder and may not be effective for all types of depression. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs primarily target pain and inflammation rather than depressive symptoms, while herbal supplements lack robust evidence and can carry risks of interactions or side effects. Thus, ECT stands out as a viable option for those with

**9. When a patient discusses his job-related stresses and you ask him to elaborate, what therapeutic technique are you using?**

- A. Clarifying**
- B. Acknowledging**
- C. Focusing**
- D. Reflection**

When you ask a patient to elaborate on job-related stresses, you are employing the therapeutic technique of focusing. This approach involves directing the patient's attention to specific aspects of their concerns or experiences to facilitate deeper exploration and understanding. By encouraging the patient to provide more details about their stressors, you help them articulate their feelings, thoughts, and potential solutions, which can lead to greater self-awareness and insight into their situation. Focusing is beneficial in therapeutic settings as it helps patients prioritize their thoughts and feelings that may be overwhelming or fragmented. In doing so, it fosters a collaborative relationship between the nurse and the patient, enabling you to better grasp the underlying issues affecting their well-being. The other techniques mentioned, such as clarifying, acknowledging, and reflection, each have distinct purposes in communication. Clarifying would involve reformulating or summarizing what the patient has shared to ensure understanding, while acknowledging would involve recognizing and validating the patient's feelings. Reflection, on the other hand, entails mirroring the patient's emotions or thoughts back to them to deepen their insight or understanding. Although these techniques are also valuable in therapeutic communication, the act of asking a patient to elaborate specifically demonstrates the focused approach to understanding their concerns more clearly.

**10. Which of the following entities is most likely to write clinical guidelines?**

- A. State legislature**
- B. DEA**
- C. Specialty organizations like the American Heart Association or American Cancer Society**
- D. DHH**

Specialty organizations, such as the American Heart Association or American Cancer Society, are primarily responsible for writing clinical guidelines because they are composed of experts in their respective fields. These organizations base their guidelines on extensive research, consensus among specialists, and evidence-based practices. Their focus is to define best practices for diagnosis, treatment, and management of specific health conditions, ensuring these guidelines are relevant, scientifically sound, and tailored to the needs of patients and healthcare providers. State legislatures typically focus on creating laws and regulations rather than developing clinical practice guidelines. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) regulates controlled substances, primarily addressing legal and regulatory issues related to drugs rather than clinical care. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHH) sets health policy and oversees public health but does not specialize in creating clinical guidelines with the same level of detail and expertise as specialty organizations. Thus, the correct choice reflects the entities that are dedicated to clinical expertise and research, making them the most suitable for developing advanced practice frameworks.

# Next Steps

**Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.**

**As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.**

**If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at [hello@examzify.com](mailto:hello@examzify.com).**

**Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:**

**<https://ag-cns.examzify.com>**

**We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!**

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