Measuring Thinking Worldwide

This document is a best practices essay from the international, multidisciplinary collection of teaching and training techniques, “Critical thinking and Clinical Reasoning in the Health Sciences.” Each essay in this set provides an example of training reasoning skills and thinking mindset described by international experts in training clinical reasoning.

Preparing Overseas Nurses to Work in Australia

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Drs. Chiu and Lim are the author team for this chapter. They are from the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Victoria University, in Victoria Australia. On its website VU describes itself as a place where “challenging conventional thinking is not only encouraged, it's expected.” Drs. Chiu and Lim are fine examples of faculty who focus on improving students’ thinking skills to help them challenge conventional wisdom.

Dr Lee Huang Chiu [left] is the coordinator of a post graduate course in Orthopedic Nursing, Dr. Meng Lim [above] co-ordinates coursework for overseas qualified and re-entry nurses preparing for their qualification to practice nursing in Australia. Her teaching specialty is postgraduate Pediatric Nursing. Together Drs. Chiu and Lim are committed to helping practicing clinicians appreciate the cultural aspects of care delivery.

Class session and students

This lesson uses a case study approach to engage participants to think critically about the influence of ethics, law, and culture. This example lesson is from a class we teach to overseas qualified nurses enrolled in the pre-registration course in the School of Nursing. The majority of these nurses come from Asia and India with a few also coming from Europe. They come to the course with different levels of preparation and experience ranging from a hospital trained certificate to a Diploma of Nursing, with only a few holding the Bachelors Degree in Nursing. Their work experience typically ranges from two to ten years. The pre-registration course is an accredited course which enables overseas qualified nurses to be registered with the Nurses Board of Victoria, Australia. One aim of the course is to familiarize nurses who have been trained overseas with the law and the cultural norms of Australia. We couple this content with readings in ethics and civic policy to prepare these nurses to work competently in Australian health care settings. Another aim is to enable these nurses to register professionally as Division 1 nurses with the Nurses Board of Victoria. The critical thinking skills we emphasize most in the exercise below are interpretation, analysis and explanation.
The goal of the class session:
Our goal is to use critical thinking to develop an understanding and awareness of the legal, ethical, professional and cultural issues related to nursing practice in Australia. Students enrolled in the course are mainly from overseas and some are migrants in Australia.

Learning objectives
This case study presentation is invaluable in enabling overseas qualified nurses to have the opportunity to use critical thinking to

- Interpret and analyse changing ethical values and the implications of advocacy in nursing;
- Analyse and explain legal issues related to nursing practice;
- Examine the implications of individual and professional accountability with reference to regulation of the profession;
- Analyse and explain the role of culture in providing nursing care within a multicultural society.

What we do to prepare for this class
Anticipating the need to discuss important and current issues in practice, we prepare by networking with friends and colleagues who are health care providers in relevant clinical settings to get ideas from them about the most current issues that are raising ethical dilemmas in their workplaces. Once we have identified the issues that will be the focus of the lesson, we conduct a literature search to get updated published information that can inform the class discussion. These relevant reading materials are prepared and handed out to students so that they will come to class ready to think well about the case study dilemmas. Figure 1 is an excerpt from the guidelines for professional and ethical nursing practice in Victoria, Australia. This is an example of the type of material we make available to students for this class session. Here they see evidence that the Australian Board of Nursing has explicit guidelines about being concerned not to coerce patients into compliance and being mindful of a potential abuse of power by the nurse. This is one issue that has relevance to our example case scenario below.

![Professional Boundaries](image-url)

Teaching the lesson
The theory session for this lesson incorporates three main themes: legal issues, ethics and professional practice issues. Case scenarios are used to address the three main themes and to develop students to understand how these themes are relevant to providing nursing care within the Australian Health Care System. The task in this class asks students to apply
information about Australian law and the Australian Health Care System to the case scenarios they encounter in the class. As a result they must come to this lesson with some mastery of that material and must have read the readings assigned for the lesson. We’ve listed some example readings for this class at the end of this chapter.

The learning activity in this lesson requires students to interpret a case study scenario, analyse the patients’ health care needs and develop a plan of intervention for the patient. Then the groups are expected to present their analysis of a case study to the class and explain their clinical judgments made on behalf of the patient. We expect students to work in groups of not more than 3 students to undertake this task and to prepare the case study presentation. Each group begins with one of our prepared case studies. Actually we allow then to choose one of the case studies, but each group must present a different case to the class. While they are working, we circle through the groups observing the thinking process being carried on by the group. When it’s appropriate and when it does not disturb the process at hand, we point out examples of strong reasoning or interject a question designed to move the group along in their analysis of the case or in their judgment of what could be done for the patient in the case. Here is an actual example of a case study assignment for presentation that is given to students undertaking the class (See Figure 2 below).

**Student Work Product**

We have developed this lesson to include two work products, the group presentation and a written summary of the groups thinking process and clinical judgment. The group presentation should take 45 to 50 minutes and include the opportunity for questions or comments from others in the class. It is expected that students’ presentation will demonstrate their ability to utilise the following processes: analysis, synthesis, clinical reasoning, decision-making, group functioning and maintenance, and problem solving. The group case study presentation is the work product for this class exercise. In a course where we use this learning strategy in several class sessions, we can ask a different group to present at each class session. Making the designation of which group will present at the end of the group work time helps each group to work at coming to closure on their possible presentation.

Additionally, a set of presentation criteria are used to assess the groups’ ability to think critically about the dilemma of ethical issues that required problem solving to resolve issues that may impact on the value or moral of patient’s life. We’ve included a list of these criteria in Figure 3.
Chin Tan is an elderly Chinese man with ischemic foot ulcers and gangrenous toes. The health care team has decided that Chin Tan needs a below knee amputation. He speaks very little English and lives with his daughter. When members of the health care team have tried to talk with him about this, he appears to be slightly confused. He keeps on telling his daughter that he does not want to have his leg cut off. The doctors plan to do the amputation in 2 days time, saying that Chin Tan’s daughter has told them her father is aware of the operation and does agree to have it. However, all Chin Tan says to the nursing staff is “Foot no good, foot no good”.

Explore the ethics of this case. In your small group and prepare a presentation outlining your clinical judgment about how to proceed with this patient dilemma.

The following are some prompts that may assist you to facilitate your discussion:

1. **Read, think and identify**: What are the ethical issues in this case study?
2. **Write down**: a clear statement about the ethical issues in this case.
3. **Analyse and explain**: Which is/are the most central ethical issue(s)? Why?
4. **Analyse, infer and propose**: possible explanations for why the issues arose.
5. **Analyse and infer**: What evidence is needed to support or disconfirm your explanations for why the ethical issues arose?
6. **Analyse**: What possible resources can be used to gather this evidence?
7. **Organise**: a plan to access these resources.
8. **Plan how the evidence will be used to make a judgement about how to proceed in the case.

**Figure 2: Case Study Scenario Group Task**

The written summary is a submitted overview of the groups’ planned case study presentation, including a summary of the major issues evident in the case study. We explain that in this summary the focus should be on demonstrating the critical thinking process that was carried out in the group. We evaluate these summaries by looking for evidence of many of the themes implicit in Figure 2. The written assignment should be brief (about 500 words) and academically written and referenced. Writing brief case summations is an important skill that is also practiced in this exercise, and we look for a concise and organized summary of their presentations written with academic quality in writing skill.
All students will be assessed on their ability to:

- Provide a brief preview of the presentation, informing audience about information to be presented
- Provide an adequate rationale for addressing the issue to be discussed
- Communicate information coherently and concisely
- Demonstrate adequate research into the issue by presenting literature search/review and critical analysis of the literature
- Respond to questions or criticisms from the audience
- Provide a concise summary of major themes
- Provide recommendations for the case where appropriate
- Demonstrate collaborative participation as a group

**Figure 3: Criteria for assessing the case presentation**

**One final comment and students’ feedback**

This exercise is an important one as it engages our students in critical thinking about their understanding and awareness of the legal, ethical, professional and cultural issues that are essential to professional nursing practice in Australia. Students enjoy this learning activity and find it challenging. They have said that it enables them to gain a better understanding of the nursing profession, Australian legal and Health Care Systems, and the related issues implicating nursing practice; and it sharpens their critical thinking skills when they have to read and discern information to solve the problem.

**Recommended Readings**


Nurses Board of Victoria (2001). Professional boundaries. Guidelines for registered nurses in Victoria. Melbourne:

**Australian Government Legislation used for the class session**

(Note: students are not expected to obtain copies of these Acts but are expected to access them as needed)

- Mental Health Act 1986 (Vic)
- Human Tissue Act 1982 (Vic)
- Age of Majority Act 1982 (Vic)
- Medical Treatment Act 1988 (Vic)
- Guardianship and Administration Act 1986 (Vic)
- Mental Health (Amendment) Act 1995
- Health Services Act 1988 (Vic)
- Freedom of information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Public Record Act 1973 (Vic)
- Drugs, Poisons & Controlled Substances Act 1981 (Vic)
- Drugs, Poisons & Controlled Substances Regulations 1995 (Vic)
- Nurses Act 1993
- Coroners Act 1985
- Child and Young Persons Act 1989 (Vic)
- Health Professions Registration Act 2005

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Although this series focuses on health science content, the techniques are transferrable to all types of training programs and educational projects. Download other essays in this series for valuable training techniques that focus student learning of reasoning skills and thinking mindset. See **Resources** on our website.

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