

Nursing Process: A Critical Thinking Tool

Assessment. Collecting and recording data to provide the information needed to:

- Predict, detect, prevent, manage, and eliminate health problems
- Predict, detect, prevent, manage, and eliminate risk factors
- Clarify expected outcomes (measurable expected results or benefits of care)
- Identify interventions to achieve outcomes, promote health, and attain optimum function and independence

Diagnosis. Analyzing and synthesizing data to draw conclusions to:

- Identify signs and symptoms that may indicate the need for referral to a more qualified professional (report these immediately)
- Identify patterns, generate a list of suspected problems, and rule out presence of health problems
- Clarify actual and potential health problems and underlying contributing factors
- Identify risk (related) factors
- Determine resources, strengths, use of healthy behaviors
- Recognize health states that are satisfactory but could be improved
- Reflect on thinking to determine whether (1)** patient participation in the process has been at an optimum level, **(2)** data are accurate and complete, **(3)** assumptions have been identified, **(4)** conclusions are based on facts (evidence) rather than guesswork, and **(5)** alternative conclusions, ideas, and solutions have been considered. (This applies to *all the phases*, but is placed here because it requires analysis, which is the focus of this phase.)

Planning. Ensuring that the patient has an individualized, comprehensive plan by clarifying expected outcomes, individualizing interventions, and making sure the plan is adequately recorded. The plan should be designed to:

- Detect, prevent, and manage the health problems and their underlying contributing factors
- Focus on priority problems and risk factors (those that *must* be managed to achieve the overall outcomes of care)
- Promote optimum function, independence, and health
- Coordinate care and include patients as partners in decision-making and care
- Achieve the desired outcomes safely, efficiently, and cost effectively
- Provide teaching to help patients make informed decisions
- Make a record that can be used to monitor progress and communicate care

Implementation. Putting the plan into action by:

- Assessing appropriateness of interventions and deciding whether the patient is ready
- Prioritizing, delegating, and coordinating care as indicated, including patients as partners in decision-making and care
- Preparing the environment and equipment for safety, comfort, and convenience
- Performing interventions, then reassessing to determine initial responses
- Making immediate changes as needed
- Charting to monitor progress and communicate care
- Updating the plan as needed

Evaluation.

- Assessing patient status to determine whether expected outcomes have been met and what factors promoted or inhibited the success of the plan
- Planning for ongoing assessment, improvement, and patient independence
- Discharging the patient or modifying the plan as indicated

Potential Complications (PC) of Common Medical Diagnoses

Angina/myocardial infarction

Dysrhythmias
Congestive heart failure/pulmonary edema
Shock (cardiogenic, hypovolemic)
Infarction, infarction extension
Thrombi/emboli formation (eg, pulmonary emboli, cerebrovascular accident)
Hypoxemia
Electrolyte imbalance/acid-base imbalance
Pericarditis/tamponade
Cardiac arrest
Stroke

Diabetes

Hyper/hypoglycemia
Delayed wound healing/infection
Hypertension
Eye problems (retinal hemorrhage)
See also angina/myocardial infarction and renal failure

Fractures

Bleeding
Fracture displacement
Thrombus/embolus formation
Compromised circulation (pressure points, edema)
Nerve compression
Infection
See also skeletal traction/casts

Head trauma

Increased intracranial pressure (secondary to bleeding or brain swelling); coma
Respiratory depression
Shock
Hyper/hypothermia

Hypertension

Cerebrovascular accident
Transient ischemic attacks (TIAs)
Renal failure
Hypertensive crisis
See also angina/myocardial infarction

Asthma/chronic obstructive lung disease

Hypoxemia
Acid-base/electrolyte imbalance
Respiratory failure
Cardiac failure
Infection

Pneumonia

Respiratory failure
Sepsis/septic shock

Pulmonary embolus

See angina/myocardial infarction

Trauma

See anesthesia/surgical or invasive procedures

Urinary tract infection

Septic shock

Renal failure

Fluid overload
Hyperkalemia
Electrolyte/acid-base imbalance
Anemia
See also hypertension

Potential Complications of Common Treatment and Diagnostic Modalities

Anesthesia/surgical or invasive procedures

Bleeding/hypovolemia/shock
Respiratory depression/atelectasis/aspiration
Urinary retention
Fluid/electrolyte imbalances
Thrombus/embolus formation
Paralytic ileus
Incisional complications (infection, poor healing, dehiscence/evisceration)
Sepsis/septic shock; hyper or hypothermia
Perioperative positioning injury, corneal abrasion

Cardiac catheterization

Bleeding
Thrombus/embolus formation

Chest tubes

Hemo/pneumothorax
Bleeding
Atelectasis
Chest tube malfunction/blockage
Infection/sepsis

Foley catheter

Infection/sepsis
Catheter malfunction/blockage

Intravenous therapy

Phlebitis/thrombophlebitis
Extravasation
Fluid overload/congestive heart failure
Infection/sepsis
Bleeding
Embolism (clot, air)

Medications

Adverse reactions (allergic response/exaggerated effects/side effects/drug interactions)
Overdose/toxicity

Nasogastric suction

Electrolyte imbalance
Tube malfunction/blockage
Aspiration

Skeletal traction/casts

Poor bone alignment
Bleeding/swelling/edema
Compromised circulation
Nerve compression
See also fractures