

Clinical Reasoning and the Process of Providing Nursing Care to Children and Families

Clinical Reasoning

A systematic thought process is essential to a profession. It assists the professional in meeting the patient's needs. Clinical reasoning is a cognitive process that uses formal and informal thinking to gather and analyze patient data, evaluate the significance of the information, and consider alternative actions ([Simmons, 2010](#)). It is based on the scientific method of inquiry, which is also the basis for the nursing process. Clinical reasoning and the nursing process are considered crucial to professional nursing in that they constitute a holistic approach to problem solving.

Clinical reasoning is a complex developmental process based on rational and deliberate thought. Clinical reasoning provides a common denominator for knowledge that exemplifies disciplined and self-directed thinking. The knowledge is acquired, assessed, and organized by thinking through the clinical situation and developing an outcome focused on optimum patient care. Clinical reasoning transforms the way in which individuals view themselves, understand the world, and make decisions. In recognition of the importance of this skill, Critical Thinking Exercises included in this text demonstrate the importance of clinical reasoning. These exercises present a nursing practice situation that challenges the student to use the skills of clinical reasoning to come to the best conclusion. A series of questions lead the student to explore the evidence, assumptions underlying the problem, nursing priorities, and support for nursing interventions that allow the nurse make a rational and deliberate response. These exercises are designed to enhance nursing performance in clinical reasoning.

Nursing Process