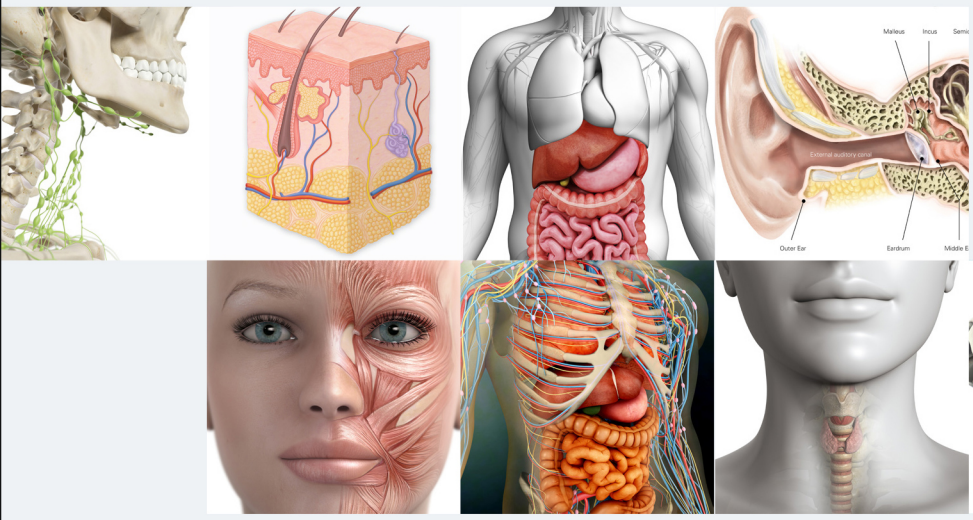
UNFOLDING HEALTH ASSESSMENT CASE STUDIES FOR THE STUDENT NURSE



KRISTI MAYNARD | ANDREA ADIMANDO

US $44.95

Critical thinking can be the difference between keeping patients safe and putting them in harm's way. But as a student nurse, you may find that mastering these skills is challenging, and you may lack confidence in assessing your patient's health.

Case studies are beneficial, but some are more effective than others. Traditionally, they present information upfront, and your patient's status is predetermined. But that isn't realistic as your patient's health can take an unexpected turn. Unfolding case studies provide new information while you read, teaching you to think critically and apply what you learned in nursing school to real-life situations you'll face on the job.

Authors Kristi Maynard and Andrea Adimando created *Unfolding Health Assessment Case Studies for the Student Nurse* as a practical, straightforward study tool for your health assessment class and the NCLEX. Whether you're a pre-licensure student who needs to review what you learned earlier or a practicing nurse who can apply these concepts to more complex scenarios, this book will:

- Enhance your knowledge and skills in basic health assessment
- Increase your comfort level in analyzing patient scenarios
- Provide opportunities to practice and apply what you learned in health assessment courses
- Develop your confidence in answering NCLEX questions

"Who wouldn't love a book that identifies, and then reveals, assessment as a superpower?

–Deborah W. Smith, DNP, ARNP, FNP-BC,
Nurse Practitioner Director
Gonzaga University

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KRISTI MAYNARD, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, CNE

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Introduction

Welcome, student nurse readers, to what we hope will be an enlightening, informative, and fun addition to your nursing school textbook collection. This book was designed with you in mind. It is intended to serve as a tool to give you practice, enhance learning, and increase your propensity for retention and application of basic concepts of health and physical assessment. The book can be used by early-career nursing students who have just begun to cover its concepts as well as by pre-licensure exam students who may benefit from reiteration and reinforcement of concepts learned early on in nursing school—and from practicing applying these concepts to more complex scenarios.

The book is divided into 13 chapters, all of which are geared toward a particular subject matter. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the concept of an unfolding case study and the nursing process. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth guide to answering NCLEX-style questions. There are several NCLEX-style questions broken down and analyzed within this chapter and several practice questions for your benefit. The remainder of the chapters are subject-based and cover assessment of the major body systems in a systematic and learner-friendly way. You will notice that while each chapter covers different content matter, the chapters are structured in similar ways so that you can begin to develop a feel for and familiarity with an unfolding case study analysis.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." —WILL DURANT

It is the authors' goal that our readers will utilize our book to attain the following knowledge and/or skills:

- Increased comfort level and confidence in analyzing patient scenarios in regards to basic health assessment
- A more in-depth knowledge of basic health assessment concepts
- Ample chances to practice applying concepts learned in your health assessment course to solidify the information you have learned
- Increased confidence in answering NCLEX-style questions
- Increased knowledge, skill levels, and confidence in assessing and managing patients with a variety of healthcare needs

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The chapters of the book do not have to be completed in any particular order, as they are each individualized to certain subject matter categories. We recommend you use these unfolding case studies as a means of evaluating your ability to think critically and apply the concepts learned in your health assessment class to realistic patient scenarios. The book can be used as a study tool during your health assessment class, a health assessment refresher tool during your other classes, and/or an NCLEX study tool once you have completed your nursing school journey.

Remember, the more you practice these concepts, the more the information will stay with you, the easier you will be able to recall and apply it, and the better nurse you will be for your future patients.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Unfolding Case Study

Kristi Maynard, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, CNE

Welcome to *Unfolding Health Assessment Case Studies for the Student Nurse*! Purchasing this book was your first step in mastering the concepts of nursing health assessment. It will introduce general principles of assessment, highlight key facts and information, and provide you with guidance on approaching NCLEX-style questions.

Chapter 1 covers some basic information that will help you maximize the use of this book as a part of your learning process.

Health Assessment Skills: Putting It Together

As a nursing student, health assessment can seem overwhelming. There is so much to know and even more to *understand*. You may be wondering what the difference is? Well, *learning* something means you can recall it, but *understanding* something means you can not only recall information but also apply it. You can think critically about advanced concepts and apply what you know to make informed decisions for your patient's care. This will help you not only be a more successful student nurse but also progress to a more informed professional nurse.

Health assessment is one of the first courses where you are putting it all together. You are taking the information you have learned in all your foundational courses and beginning the process of critical analysis, which is imperative for your development as a professional nurse. For the first time, you will consider why something is happening. For example, *intermittent claudication* is defined as pain in the legs while walking. As discussed, it

What is the NCLEX?

The National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) is the nationwide licensure examination used in the United States. The NCLEX is developed and administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. Once you graduate from your nursing program, you are required to meet the minimum passing requirements of the NCLEX before you can apply for state licensure. The exam ensures that you are competent to enter professional practice as an entry-level nurse.

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is not enough to merely know the definition; you must understand why the symptom occurs and reflect on what it reveals about your patient's health condition.

As an experienced nurse, I can logically deduce that if my patient subjectively reports symptoms consistent with intermittent claudication, the patient is probably experiencing oxygen starvation in the muscles of the legs when walking. This is likely because the muscles are not receiving adequate blood flow, which is generally caused by plaque development in the major arterial vessels of the legs (because I know arteries carry oxygenated blood). Now that I have identified a potential cause, I can let that lead the rest of my physical assessment. I should consider checking pulses, skin quality for ulcerations and temperature, or auscultating for femoral bruits.

Health assessment is like developing a superpower. Based on the subjective and objective information you gather from your patient, you are able to predict patient needs, anticipate impending disaster, and deduce precise elements of your patient's health. As a student nurse, understanding the basics and being able to apply the information you gather to contribute to the big picture will help you during your academic career.

With a solid foundation in critical reasoning and application, you can recall your health assessment roots to think through more complex scenarios that will arise through your nursing education. If you fail to master this content, it is likely you will struggle to build your nursing knowledge. You must lay a solid foundation before you put up the walls. The comprehensive, head-to-toe health assessment is a rite of passage. The ability to perform a head-to-toe assessment in a calculated, meaningful way means you have arrived!

The Traditional Case Study

A *case study* is the presentation of a patient scenario meant to illustrate a particular concept or principle. Case studies may vary in length and complexity. Some may ask you to answer a set of questions at the end; others may provide you with the answers to pertinent questions for the sake of delivering specific content. The overarching goal of the case study is to engage the reader in the critical analysis of the patient scenario. Case studies are very popular in the field of nursing, but they are not unique to the nursing community. They are frequently used in the social sciences.

While there are some variations in exactly how they may appear, case studies are a widely accepted method incorporated into nursing education to engage the student in the process of active learning. *Active learning* is the

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process of learning in an engaged, interactive format that invokes critical thinking. Inversely, *passive learning* is when you are learning despite a lack of critical thinking or active engagement. An example of passive learning might be listening to a traditional lecture with accompanying PowerPoint. Evidence-based literature tells us that active learning is superior for long-term recall and application (Prince, 2004). Engaging in active learning strategies greatly increases the likelihood that you are not simply recalling information on cue but that you truly understand the information and can apply it to complex situations.

The Unfolding Case Study

Similar to a traditional case study, an *unfolding case study* presents the reader with a patient scenario. What is unique about the unfolding case study is the evolutionary nature of the scenario. This simulated scenario provides readers with more information about the patient or the patient's progress as they work through the case. This is beneficial because it allows for the case to begin with basic concepts and layer more complex concepts as the case builds. Using this method, readers must not only consider what has already happened but also anticipate potential changes in patient status.

This process of evaluation and re-evaluation is more consistent with real-life patient care and aids in the development of clinical reasoning skills (Bowman, 2017). As a method of low-fidelity simulation, the unfolding case study has been recognized by the National League for Nursing as a robust and meaningful student learning experience (National League for Nursing, 2019).

Integrating unfolding case studies into your study routine means integrating simulation. Simulation has become a critical element of nursing education (Eyikara & Baykara, 2017). When you think of simulation, you probably imagine a simulation lab with high-tech mannequins and lots of fancy equipment—*high-fidelity simulation*.

What you probably don't realize is that you can engage in simulation activities from the comfort of your own home with no high-tech mannequins required! *Low-fidelity simulation* involves simulated patient scenarios with little or no technological component. Sound familiar?

Unfolding case studies are the perfect example of a low-fidelity simulation activity. Like high-fidelity simulation, these cases ask the reader to engage in critical reasoning and active learning, two methods known to increase a student's ability to comprehend and apply the content they are studying (Sofer, 2018). *Critical reasoning* involves the ability to actively and skillfully

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conceptualize, analyze, question, and evaluate a scenario and is imperative for both the NCLEX and professional nursing success.

The unfolding case study is a form of active learning. It requires repetitive evaluation and re-evaluation of the patient scenario to determine health outcomes and nursing priorities. The unfolding case study is a method of low-fidelity simulation, which means it doesn't require any fancy, expensive equipment!

Active learning activities will better prepare you to apply elements of critical reasoning when presented with either a fictional or, more importantly, real-life scenario. To put it simply, you will be better prepared to think on your feet if you have prepared with active learning strategies. So, when those NCLEX questions are asking you to select the "most correct" response, you will be able to meaningfully analyze the stem and responses and make the correct choice because that is what you have been training yourself to do all along! If you have been relying on methods of recall to get you through nursing school, complex NCLEX questions that ask you to analyze and interpret a scenario may seem impossible.

The case studies in this text have been developed with the novice nursing student in mind. They are purposefully simplified to match your current level of application while still offering lessons in critical reasoning to enhance not only health assessment skills but your practical skills. Whenever you are engaged in active learning, you are building your practical and clinical reasoning skills.

Tips for Working With Unfolding Case Studies

Here are a few tips for getting the most out of the unfolding case studies presented in this book:

Read each case carefully.

Put the book down for a few seconds after reading a new section of the vignette (the case) and think about how what you just read will affect your patient. How does this influence your plan of care? What are your priorities for care? Have your priorities changed based on the information you just read?

Don't jump ahead to the practice questions.

Be thoughtful about the patient scenario and consider the details you have been presented. Health assessment is about taking in the subjective and objective information that you gather and formulating priorities and a plan

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based on evidence-based best practice for patient care. We will integrate evidence-based practices throughout the cases.

Read the questions carefully.

Underline key components of the question and then carefully read through the options. Think. It. Through. Simplify the question in your own words to make it more manageable (keeping scrap paper close by is helpful).

Read through question rationale.

Take the time to read and understand why your selection was correct or incorrect. Make notes or comments on the page that help you identify and retain key pieces of information that may be helpful in your future studies. If you read a rationale and still find yourself uncertain about content or a concept, look it up! Use your textbook or an evidence-based search engine to get more information on what you are investigating.

Look through a new lens.

After you have completed the guidance questions, go back to the previous section of the vignette and read through it again. Now that you have acquired new knowledge, were there key elements in the patient description that might have led you to prioritize this patient differently?

Think ahead and take a moment to ask, "What if?"

Based on the current state and trajectory of your patient, what do you anticipate may happen to this patient in the future? How might that affect your nursing priorities or care?

Set yourself up for success!

Don't get discouraged or frustrated if you don't know the answer to a question. This is a tool for learning; it is not expected that you will answer every question perfectly. The questions are intended to provide practice with NCLEX-style questions while introducing relevant content.

Conclusion

Each chapter ends with a worksheet (see Sample Worksheet at the end of this chapter). The worksheet contains prompts to direct your thoughts and help you identify areas of strength and weakness. Use these worksheets to realistically evaluate your performance on the case. Self-evaluation is a valuable tool for personal growth.

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In closing, have fun with this book. We hope it serves as the powerful study resource we intended it to be. As nursing professors who have been teaching undergraduate health assessment for many years, we appreciate the complexity of this material. We understand how much easier it is to understand and apply this content if it is presented in a way that gets you thinking, and we hope this text does just that!

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SAMPLE WORKSHEET

Based on my initial assessment I thought:

_____

_____

_____

Based on my revised/informed assessment I now know:

_____

_____

_____

A nursing priority for this patient would be _____

because _____

After completing this chapter, something I have learned is:

_____

_____

_____

After completing this chapter, something I need more clarity on is:

_____

_____

_____

After completing this chapter, something else I want to learn is:

_____

_____

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CHAPTER 4

Assessment Considerations for the Geriatric Patient

Louis E. D'Onofrio Jr., DNP, MSN, FNP-C, PCCN
Kristi Maynard, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, CNE

CASE STUDY

Geriatric Patient Presenting With Confusion

- 72-year-old male
- Presenting to the PCP with intermittent confusion

T 97.0°F oral	HR 92 bpm (reg.)	BP 128/70	RR 14	O2 97%	Pain 1/10

Mr. Hanks, a 72-year-old male, presents to the primary care outpatient office accompanied by his son. The patient is intermittently confused. The patient's son reports that they live together, and he has noticed his father's memory has worsened over the past two months. The son reports that his father has not had a primary care visit in the last four years and has never seen a gerontologist. Mr. Hanks's son is worried that something was missed over the years his father was neglecting care and would like to start "from scratch" and also address his "memory problems."

QUESTION 4.1 (Multiple choice)

Gerontology is the study of:

A) Only the diseases unique to the aging population

B) The elderly population with mental health issues

C) The aging person and their social, cognitive, biological, and psychological aspects

D) Adult diseases

Answer: C

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RATIONALE

Gerontology is the study of older adults and aging by means of a multidisciplinary approach. Gerontology focuses on the aging person and includes cognitive, biological, social, and psychological topics of those aging. *Geriatrics* is a specific medical specialty focused on care and treatment of older adults. A *geriatrician* is a medical provider that specializes in the aging population and the medical conditions associated with aging.

The projected number of US residents aged 65 and older by the year 2060 is 95 million (Population Reference Bureau, 2019). With an increase in our aging population, it is crucial to think about medical risk factors associated with aging. As we all age, it is normal for every organ system to undergo changes. Visual acuity decreases, cerumen production and hearing loss increase, muscle mass and strength decline, and the immune system undergoes changes that make it difficult to fight infection (Jaul & Barron, 2017). One of the most common chronic diseases in older adults is hypertension, and cancer is the second cause of death in older adults (Jaul & Barron, 2017). With many changes occurring during age, it is important for nurses to have strong assessment skills to identify problems early and respond to this steadily growing population.

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