The Clinical Placement
The Clinical Placement
An essential guide for nursing students 3e

Tracy Levett-Jones
Sharon Bourgeois
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DEDICATIONS

To the amazing nursing students whose journeys into nursing I have had the privilege of sharing; and to Tyler Alexander Jones, with love.

Tracy Levett-Jones

I dedicate this book to all students of nursing (past, present and future): a genuine treasure to human kind.
To Patrice, my heartfelt thanks for your support; you are always there.

Sharon Bourgeois
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Professor Tracy Levett-Jones
RN, PhD, MEd&Work BN, DipAppSC (Nsg)
Tracy is the Deputy Head of School (Teaching and Learning) in the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the Director of the Research Centre for Health Professional Education at the University of Newcastle. Her research interests include clinical education, belongingness, clinical reasoning, simulation, interprofessional education, cultural competence and patient safety. Tracy’s doctoral research explored the clinical learning experiences of students in Australia and the United Kingdom. She has a broad clinical background and, prior to her academic career, worked as a medical-surgical nurse and nurse educator. Tracy has authored a number of books, book chapters and journal papers on clinical education and has received 10 teaching and learning awards, which include a New South Wales Minister for Education Quality Teaching Award and an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Award for Teaching Excellence.

Associate Professor Sharon Bourgeois
RN, PhD, MEd, MA, BA, OTCert, FCNA
Sharon works with staff and students on the School of Nursing outreach campuses (Bega, Batemans Bay, Shoalhaven, Southern Sydney) at the University of Wollongong. There, she lectures in both the undergraduate and the postgraduate programs of nursing and is recognised as a teaching scholar for the school. Sharon has been involved in various leadership roles associated with nursing education, facilitating students’ clinical and theoretical learning and supporting registered nurses’ educational development. Her formal research interests have focused on the discourses of caring—identifying ‘an archive of caring for nursing’. She has a strong interest in models of education and students’ experiences of the clinical learning environment. Sharon’s nursing experiences began in New Zealand as a student nurse. This was followed by clinical experiences in surgical, general practice, perioperative nursing and education in both New Zealand and Australia. In 2009 Sharon was the recipient of the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence at the University of Western Sydney. She advocates that nurses embrace all elements of the professional role to enhance and promote care.
REVIEWERS

Maree Bauld  MEd, MCN, Grad Cert L&T HlthProf, GradDip CritCare, RN  
Lecturer, School of Health Sciences, University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

Jan Edwards  BAppSc, GradDip(Ed), MPH, PhD, FACN, CENA, AWMA, RM, RN  
Lecturer, School of Health Professions, Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Liz James  BLibS, MEd, RM, RN  
Midwifery Team Manager, Centre for Health and Social Practice, Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton, New Zealand  
New Zealand College of Midwives

Carley Jans  BA Nsg, MAEd  
Lecturer, University of Wollongong at SMART Infrastructure Facility, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia

Victoria Kain  NICC, PhD, MN, RN  
Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

Kylie Russell  PhD, MA HScEd, BA Nsg  
Clinical Coordinator, School of Nursing and Midwifery, The University of Notre Dame, Fremantle, Western Australia, Australia

Christine Taylor  PhD, MHScEd, BSc(Hons), BAppSc(AdvNsg), RN  
Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Western Sydney, Penrith, New South Wales, Australia  
Executive Committee Member, Australian Nurse Teachers’ Society
The aim of this book is to guide you on your clinical journey. There is plenty of evidence—anecdotal and empirical—to suggest that clinical placement experiences can be both tremendous and challenging. This book will help you to appreciate and capitalise on the tremendous, and to ride out any challenging situations you may encounter in what is sure to be one of the most exciting journeys of your life.

The ultimate goal of clinical education is to develop nurses who are confident and competent beginning practitioners. Positive and productive clinical placement experiences are pivotal to your success. This book encourages you to use your clinical placements as opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin quality practice, and to appreciate the clinical environment for the wonderful learning experience that it is.
This book explores both the complex issues and the everyday situations that make up clinical placements. Although it is written primarily for nursing students, it will also be of interest to anyone involved in the clinical education of undergraduate nurses or new graduates. Academics, clinical educators, facilitators, clinicians, mentors and managers will find the information it contains useful as a stimulus for dialogue and debate in tutorials, inservices and debriefing sessions. The book's interactive style is designed to engage with active readers and to encourage them to integrate the material into their practice. Some of the sections are deliberately provocative in order to challenge your assumptions and preconceptions and to help you think more critically about important issues.

**HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

Each chapter consists of a number of different sections. Within these sections theory is interwoven to explain core principles. **Learning activities** appear throughout the book to help you relate theory to the reality of practice. **Something to think about boxes** provide words of wisdom to reflect on and valuable snippets of advice. **Coaching tips** allow you to apply what you learn to your clinical experiences. **Student stories** and reflections bring the book to life and will encourage you to re-examine your own practice experiences.

Students who have read earlier editions of this book provide the following advice: Read chapters 1–3 early in your nursing program, before you attend any clinical placements. These chapters provide foundational knowledge that will set you up to be successful. Read chapters 4 and 5 thoughtfully—they are written at a more sophisticated level and are deliberately designed to challenge you to excel as a nurse. Most students read these chapters before they attend a placement but continue to use them throughout their nursing program (and beyond) as an ongoing reference and source of support.

**Chapter 1** sets the scene by focusing on the ‘rules of engagement’ in complex clinical environments. The clinical context and culture are described and coaching tips provided to help you navigate your way successfully through this dynamic and exciting journey.

**Chapter 2** provides insights into the ‘great expectations’ placed upon nursing students by patients, clinicians, universities and the nursing profession as a whole. Armed with a clear understanding of what is required as you traverse the clinical learning milieu, your chances of success will be multiplied.

**Chapter 3** gives a practical and positive description of how to behave within clinical environments. Tips for maximising learning opportunities are provided, along with strategies for dealing with difficult and challenging situations.

**Chapter 4** focuses on the thinking processes, beliefs, attitudes and values that underpin successful clinical performance and encourages you to think about and reflect on your experiences in ways that are meaningful and relevant.

**Chapter 5** looks at the ways nurses define and promote their profession through effective communication and gives advice on how to interact with patients and colleagues in ways that are both person-centred and clinically safe.

In this book our role as ‘storytellers’ has been made possible by borrowing experiences from many people. We would like to thank the many generous students and colleagues who have shared their stories and insights with us.

Since the first edition of our book was published in 2007 we have received a great deal of positive feedback from reviewers and students alike. Comments such as those below have affirmed the value of our book as a guide to clinical placement:

‘I felt like your book was written just for me, I couldn’t put it down—I read it from cover to cover in one sitting.’
Introduction

‘I just used your book again in another assignment. I’m sure putting a book like this together is a labour of love and I just wanted you to know that it’s like having a mate on hand for the times when you are really questioning your placement experiences.’

‘This book is GREAT!! It validates everything we have been trying to get across to students. It is becoming a prescribed text from this minute!’

‘I love your book. I showed it to the students and encouraged them all to get one, told them it was full of great info and interesting stories ... it’s a masterpiece!’

‘I have added this book to our library; it is invaluable for our educators.’

In this version we have retained much of the original but we have enhanced the sections that address contemporary issues such as patient safety, clinical reasoning, therapeutic communication, interprofessional communication and the use of social media (to name a few). We hope you enjoy (and learn from) our latest edition and that it helps you achieve success in your nursing journey.

THE ‘CLINICAL PLACEMENT INSIGHTS’

The ‘Insights from experts’ chapter from previous editions of this book is now an exciting compilation of videos where clinicians introduce you to the learning opportunities provided in diverse practice areas. Although we haven’t been able to cover every clinical specialty, the selection we have included will open your eyes to the wonderful opportunities available to nursing students and to graduates.

To access the videos go to ...

Note: The stories included in this book are real but the names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.