

# To the Teacher

## About This Textbook

Nurses and other health care workers have an inherent need to communicate. If they are not able to communicate successfully, their jobs may be in jeopardy and, worse, patients may suffer. Instructors who use this textbook are in a position to help nursing students, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), nurses, and other health care workers attain communicative competence by improving their vocabulary, communication strategies, and pronunciation.

A knowledge of the field of nursing is not required for instructors who use this textbook. The majority of the material is language-based, not industry-based. The terminology that is used, such as *symptom*, *medication*, and *procedure*, is easy to understand. Any medical vocabulary that appears is used in context.

In constructing the scope and sequence of this book, we surveyed a variety of working nurses to learn which areas of the job (e.g., giving instructions, shift changes, etc.) are most crucial in day-to-day nursing in terms of clear communication. We also asked which language features (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.) seemed to be most problematic for health care workers whose first language is not English. We also reviewed current textbooks in the nursing industry that focus on interpersonal communication. In addition, individual nursing students who are not fluent speakers of English were shown sample material to solicit their feedback. Some material in this book was pilot-tested with classes of ESL student nurses. Finally, multiple RNs were consulted as to the authenticity of the language used.

## Who Will Benefit from This Textbook?

In compiling and developing the material that would make up this textbook, we envisioned these individuals as the ones who would benefit the most:

- Nursing students enrolled in community college (e.g., pre-nursing courses or RN students who have a special class)
- ESL students enrolled in specific CNA or medical assistant classes
- ESL students enrolled in U.S. universities who are here to learn more about nursing or health care as profession (they may or may not already have a degree in their own countries)
- Nurses or health care workers who already work in a health care setting but who are not proficient in English and so may be taking an English course sponsored by the hospital or local health system

It is therefore generally assumed that students have some knowledge of common medical and health care terms, so the book does not attempt to teach medical terminology, except in the context of communicating effectively in a health care setting. The various Vocabulary sections in each unit can therefore be used as review or as a new lesson—whatever works best for your students.

## Why a Communication Strategies–Based Book?

Other English for Nursing or Health Care textbooks tend to be more academic, focusing on the same vocabulary and themes that students learn in their other nursing classes. For example, there may be a reading about wound care, which includes vocabulary like *dressing*, *debridement*, or *non-stick pads*. Thus, students practice reading skills and learn vocabulary, but they do not develop the skills necessary for face-to-face communication.

The nature of this textbook, however, is to give students the tools to build, maintain, or repair interactions that take place in their health care training or on the job in a health care setting. Thus, students will be able to communicate about wound care, asking colleagues questions such as, *I wonder if you can show me how to clean this wound.* or, *Did you say we need 15 or 50 bandages?* Or, for example, to make sure their message is understood by the client by using a “confirmation check,” such as *Are you following me?* or *Sorry, did you catch that?* This text was designed to provide students with a firm grasp of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, which will result in more successful interactions.

This textbook will also help develop pragmatic competence by asking students to practice the formulaic phrases needed to get things done. There are many specific social situations such as apologizing, giving advice, or expressing condolences, when the appropriate register and use of English is necessary.

## A Note about Specific Terminology

The nursing terminology used in the textbook may differ from what some students have heard elsewhere because terminology is always evolving. One term that health care workers will have heard is *patient*, but the newer term, *client*, has been used throughout this textbook (although both terms are on the audio CD). As for equipment, some may say *cath bag*, while others say *Foley bag*. Most adults are familiar with the abbreviation ER for Emergency Room; however, recently more medical centers are using the term ED for Emergency Department or even EC for Emergency Center. Students may substitute terms used in their own facilities or words they are more familiar with for terms in the textbook if they wish. Note also that a large number of abbreviations and acronyms appear in this textbook. To help students, we have used periods for abbreviations (where letters are said) except in the cases of RN, CNA, and ED.

## Contents

*Take Care* consists of 12 units in five thematic parts (Communicating with Clients, Communicating with Colleagues, Client Information, Around the Facility, and Caring for Clients). The textbook can be used in a quarter- or semester-long course. Ideally, the units should be studied in order as some material is recycled. Each unit is divided into two parts, each of which consists of seven sections.

## Sections

### *Listening to the Action/Listening for Language*

The focal point of each listening item is a conversation using content from either the Vocabulary or Communication Strategy sections from the unit. Students are asked to listen for specific words or phrases. Depending on students’ level or experience, the instructor may want to play only the first con-

versation and then check students' answers before continuing. Students only need to write the key phrase, not the entire sentence, in the blanks provided. After playing the entire track once and checking for understanding, the instructor can then play it again so that students can check their answers. It is not necessary to go into detail about each answer as an explanation is given later in the unit. These items are recorded on the audio CD packaged with the text.

### *Dialogue*

The Dialogue, set in a hospital or skilled nursing facility, contains examples of vocabulary items and communication strategies from the unit. Students should read this dialogue and practice pronunciation (stress, rhythm, intonation, and segmentals) as they work with a partner or small group. They may not understand all the vocabulary initially but will have ample practice opportunities throughout the unit. Dialogues are not recorded on the audio CD.

### *Vocabulary*

Ten to 30 health care–related lexical items are included in each Vocabulary section. The students will be familiar with many of the individual words through their previous health care studies or through their jobs, but grouping the words together sometimes makes it easier to study the set. Explanations of the words are rarely given in the lists themselves. Rather, the explanations of the words emerge in the vocabulary exercises, dialogues, or class discussions.

### *Communication Strategy*

Mastery of the communication strategies included in this textbook—whether they be a speech act (e.g., agreeing, apologizing, or giving advice), a confirmation or comprehension check, or a non-verbal cue or gesture—is crucial for success in the health care field. Health care workers who do not speak English as a first language need to learn how to avoid or repair a communication breakdown when speaking with clients, colleagues, or supervisors. When teaching each lesson, the instructor must make sure that students understand the meaning behind each strategy before they begin the exercises. Additional phrases that arise during the lesson can be added to the list. Common idiomatic phrases have been added when appropriate.

### *Pronunciation*

The Pronunciation sections, many of which are contextualized, cover the main suprasegmentals (intonation, stress, and rhythm) of English. Some basic sounds (e.g., /ch/, /th/) are also practiced. We avoided use of the IPA and other technical pronunciation content where possible, but in a few cases it was the only way to focus on common problems (like *-ed* vs. *t* or the schwa). The instructor must model the pronunciation of the key phrases for the students to repeat and then allow students to have ample time to practice. The textbook uses visual cues to make pronunciation rules clear. For example, black dots help students visualize the stressed syllables and bold type makes it easier for students to focus on particular sounds. When students are practicing any of the exercises in the text like the dialogues, they should be encouraged to sound as natural as possible. That is, correcting a student's pronunciation should not be limited to the pronunciation sections of the textbook.

### *Dialogue Review*

The Dialogue Review serves as a bridge between the Dialogue and the role plays. At this point, students will be able to review and identify the featured vocabulary items and communication strategies that appeared in the dialogue from the beginning of the section. By comparing their answers with a partner, they are again exposed to the language and have the opportunity to practice.

### *Role Plays*

Role play exercises contain seven scenarios. The role plays may be practiced in pairs or groups of three as noted.

- Students may briefly read all scenarios.
- Students may practice the scenarios while the instructor circulates to decide who will perform which role play for the class.
- Students may be assigned one of the scenarios to develop more thoroughly before performing for the class.

### *End-of-Unit Discussion*

This sharing exercise gives students the opportunity to produce the language features rather than merely practicing them. In addition to being able to give their opinions and exchange ideas on a topic, students can discuss how various issues affect them personally.

### *Culture Point*

The Culture Point is in the form of a story. The characters in the stories are health care workers and clients. After reading the story, students must determine why a misunderstanding has occurred. Although students are very familiar with their own cultures, they may lack the knowledge of how to interact with clients and colleagues who come from different cultural backgrounds. This exercise allows for personal and professional growth. Possible explanations are given on pages 231–32.