Peds Pearls

Passing the CPEN (and Other Exams)

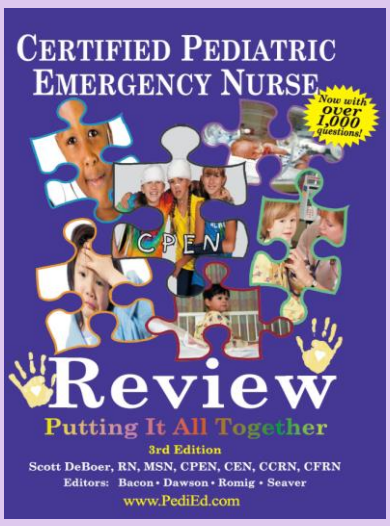
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Some of us absolutely look forward to working with children in the Emergency Department (or elsewhere). And some of us absolutely enjoy preparing for, scheduling, and taking any variety of national certification exams. For those lucky people, we say, "Go forth and multiply." Seriously, we need more people like you! But, for everyone else, while all of the other *Pediatric Pearls* are designed to help with the first challenge mentioned above, the following words of wisdom are intended to help you pass any of those fun certifications, and especially the Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse (CPEN) exam.

Get a CPEN review book: There are several CPEN review books available, but the two that we actually recommend include:

1) *Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse Review: Putting It All Together*
(Scott DeBoer - www.PediEd.com)



Yes, we're biased, but the 3rd edition is a really great review of pediatric medical and traumatic emergencies. It consists of over 1,000 multiple choice questions, and more importantly, each one has a short rationale as to why each selected choice is correct or incorrect. There are lots of illustrations (by Scott's teen daughter) which add perspective and a relaxed feel to the book. It's written in a conversational tone, so you feel like you are attending a presentation with questions and answers being discussed among friends. The book is divided into chapters by individual body systems. That way, if you stink at endocrine and rock at peds cardiac, review the endocrine chapter and skim over the cardiac questions.
(Also available in audio book and e-book forms.)

2) *Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse (CPEN) Review Manual* (Emergency Nurses Association - www.ena.org)
The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) published its own CPEN review book and it is also a valuable resource. We really like the fact that the questions are written in the same format and style as the test questions. The rationales are good and certainly medically correct; but, in our humble opinion, it just reads more like a Q&A textbook and lacks the more relaxed, and hopefully enjoyable, tone of the other review manual.

Review the *Emergency Nursing Pediatric Course (ENPC)* book: This is crucial! Many CPENs have indicated they saw lots of questions that looked like they came directly from information presented in the ENPC book. That shouldn't be surprising, and actually makes this text a great review source. We highly recommend you buy or borrow an ENPC book and review it prior to taking the test, especially the sections on triage and pain management. For example, look for triage related scenarios where you are asked which of the patients being presented should be seen first (according to the standards presented in the ENPC book.) It is also valuable to review ESI triage acuity assessments. Review pain management scales (lots of options) and anatomic injection locations for pain meds. Trust us - borrow the book!

Review the Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) book: Again, like ENPC, buy or borrow a current copy of the book. It looks really bad to miss basic PALS questions on the CPEN exam.

Attend a CPEN prep/review course: Whether in person or on-line, CPEN courses can really help put all the pieces together. We know that the more senses that we use during the learning process, the more likely we are to retain and fully appreciate the knowledge presented. The in-person reviews are generally a great, very fast paced review of all things related to pediatric emergency care, coupled with lots of test taking tips. Either live or on-line… when paired with the above review book suggestions, review courses put all the pieces together. (www.PediEd.com/CPEN for more info)

So, in summary, if you want to greatly increase your chances of passing the CPEN exam, remember: practice, practice, practice. The more exposure you get to the types of questions that you'll see on the exam, the greater the likelihood of success! Try these simple steps: 1) get (and use) a CPEN review book (or two); 2) review PALS and ENPC texts; 3) take a CPEN review course. While there is no substitute for hands-on experience in real-life situations, when it comes to passing a standardized exam, you have to study and know what is in the book, because that's reflective of the body of knowledge being evaluated. Last, but not least, the CPEN exam is not cheap, so protect your investment with adequate preparation and you'll proudly become a CPEN!



Photo courtesy of the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing.

www.bcencertifications.org



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Contact us to have Scott DeBoer or one of our other pediatric experts present at your next conference.

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