As a newly prepared nurse practitioner (NP), you are to be congratulated on your success to date. After completing a rigorous graduate program, your days of study are not yet over but continue with a new focus. You need to continue to develop, expand and refine your NP knowledge base to assure success with certification. But how do you do this? Here is advice I provide in response to commonly asked questions about preparing for certification.

In preparing for the NP certification exam, where should I start?

Start with reviewing the information on the exam content. Make a list of the areas where you feel your knowledge base is secure and where just reviewing material to refresh your memory will likely suffice. Also, make a second list where you identify areas of weakness and topics where you need to concentrate your review. If you have taken an NP review course, you are likely aware that the content of certain parts of the program were truly review, where other sections help to point out areas where you need to expand on your knowledge base. Knowing what areas you need to focus on helps you decide how to allocate your study time.

(Study Plan: Continued on page 7)
Question and Answer with Dr. Margaret A. Fitzgerald

Do the Certifying Bodies Offer Special Accommodations for Completing the Exam?

**Question:** Does AANP or ANCC allow for special accommodations for extra time on their exams?

**Answer:** The nurse practitioner (NP) certification organizations and their testing vendors will make reasonable efforts to accommodate candidates with documented disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In order to be appropriately accommodated, the NP certification candidate must comply with the certifying agent’s procedure to ensure accommodation. For example, one of the major NP certification organizations requires that the NP certification candidate provide the following with the examination application; a report from a qualified health care professional that contains information about the specific diagnosis, current findings that support the diagnosis, date of the most current evaluation (must be within the last 3 years), date of initial diagnosis, and a description of the functional limitations resulting from the disability. Additional information that must be held in the report includes specific recommendations for the testing accommodation(s) including a detailed explanation of why the accommodation is needed. If the accommodation includes extra time, the report must indicate the specific amount of time needed. The agency reserves the right to request additional information after a review of the aforementioned reports.

**Important System Update Information**

Routine maintenance is scheduled for April 20, 2013. FHEA is committed to providing our customers maximum uptime, reliability and security for our On-line Testing and Learning Site, www.fhea.com/npexpert. Regular system maintenance is critical to achieving this goal and is normally performed the third Saturday of each month.

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**What FHEA Customers Say...**

“I am an MSN-FNP student from the University of Cincinnati. I was advised by my preceptor to take the FHEA seminar [NP Certification Exam Review and Advanced Practice Update] for board exam preparation. I attended a live seminar, bought the review book by FHEA and also received the course workbook. I studied and reviewed both for three months for about 3-4 hours a day. I then passed AANP exam on my first attempt. About 80-90% of the questions were similar to FHEA review questions and the rest were common sense questions. FHEA review helped me pass exam. Thank you very much!”  
—Messeret Tewolde, CNP, FNP
NP News in Brief

Nevada Bill Aims to Remove NP Practice Barriers
A Nevada bill has proposed that the state’s nurse practitioners (NPs) should be allowed to practice without physician oversight. Currently, there are 17 other states that allow NPs to practice independently. If the bill is passed, the 790 board licensed NPs practicing in Nevada have the authority to prescribe, treat, diagnose, and test patients without the supervision of a physician. They would also be able to operate their own practices. NPs and other proponents of independent NP practice believe that passing this bill would lead to increased access to healthcare in Nevada at a time when the need for healthcare providers is increasing. Thus far, no state that has passed an independent NP practice legislation has repealed it. The Nevada State Board of Nursing is in full support of the bill. Read more

FDA Considers Tougher Restrictions on Prescription Opioids
The United States (US) Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently convened an advisory panel to review restrictions for prescribing opioids that contain hydrocodone, such as Vicodin. The majority of the panel recommended that harsher restrictions on prescribing opioids could help reduce the potential for abuse of these medications, which has become widespread in the US over the years. The proposed restrictions include requiring hydrocodone refills to be granted through a new prescription and eliminating faxed or phoned-in hydrocodone prescriptions. Other potential restrictions include limiting opioid prescriptive authority to physicians. Some suggested that prohibiting healthcare providers such as nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs) from prescribing hydrocodone could reduce the availability, thereby curbing abuse. Others state that this could be detrimental to patients who suffer from chronic pain conditions, especially those in rural areas and those in nursing homes, as it could prevent them from receiving the treatment they need. It is believed that the FDA will follow many of the recommendations. Read more

DNP Programs are on the Rise in North Carolina
The doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree option was recently approved at six public universities in North Carolina. This fall, nursing students who wish to obtain a DNP will have the option to do so at East Carolina University, the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, UNC at Greensboro, Winston-Salem State University, and Western Carolina University. This degree option is already offered at Duke University and Gardner-Webb University, two of North Carolina’s private universities, and various other public and private universities across the United States. According to the North Carolina Board of Nursing, there are 96,663 licensed registered nurses working in any nursing field in the state with 9,585 having earned an MSN and just 403 who hold a DNP. The DNP degree is designed in part to provide advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) such as nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, certified nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse specialists with an enhanced education in keeping with the complexities of healthcare provision. This push for the DNP degree coincides with recommendations in the Institute of Medicine’s 2010 report The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health, which stated that the number of nurses with a doctorate degree should be doubled by 2020. Read more
Comparing states where NPs practice with and without mandated physician collaboration

by Carolyn Buppert, NP, JD

I recently completed a project for a state where nurse practitioners (NPs) may introduce legislation to do away with the requirements for physician collaboration. For one section of my report, I tallied the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) reports of actions against nurse practitioners in the 11 states where they are independent (using the National Council of State Legislators' list of states where NPs practice independently) and the 39 states where they are not, and calculated averages. I also calculated the averages for reports against physicians in the 11 states where nurse practitioners are independent and the 39 states where they are not, and found the following:

NPDB reports on NPs in independent states averaged 1:104 (one report for every 104 nurse practitioners).

NPDB reports on NPs in collaborative/supervisory states averaged 1:124.

NPDB reports on MDs in independent NP states averaged 1:3.5. NPDB reports on MDs in collaborative/supervisory states averaged 1:3.5.

I don’t quite know what to make of these numbers. It appears that physicians are no more or less likely to have actions filed against them in states where NPs must collaborate. However, NPs in states with collaborative requirements were slightly less likely to have an action filed with the NPDB.

What I found most striking is the very small percentage of NPs who get reported, as compared with physicians.

For more information on the legal and business issues affecting NPs and their employers, visit www.buppert.com.

This information was reprinted with permission from Carolyn Buppert, NP, JD.
FHEA 25th Anniversary Resort Destinations

Learn about the latest in drug therapy with Dr. Margaret A. Fitzgerald as she presents the FHEA Pharmacology Update in desirable resort settings.

Topics Include:
- Drug Update: New products, new indications, new warnings
- Pharmacogenomics: Exploring genetic variations in drug metabolism
- Antimicrobial Update: A focus on treatment recommendations in urinary tract infections (UTI)
- Prescribing in the Presence of Impaired Renal Function
- Depression: A primary care approach to assessment and intervention
- As Seen on TV: What’s in the OTC and herbal products your patients are taking?

Falmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts
July 23-24, 2013

Boscolo Prague Hotel
Prague, Czech Republic
September 13-14, 2013

20th Annual Pharmacology Conference
Sponsored by the Utah Nurse Practitioners
May 17-18, 2013
Marriott City Centre Hotel
220 South State St
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

This conference is designed to meet the continuing education needs of advanced practice nurses. There will be an intense review and update of new pharmacological agents. Discussion of drugs and treatment modalities relating to specific illnesses will be reviewed at length. Drug actions, indication for use, contraindications, and side effects will be presented. Program content meets the State of Utah educational requirement for APRNs to maintain prescriptive privilege. This program is pending approval with the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Certificates will be available at the conference. Appropriate CE will be available for attendance.

Conference Objectives:
- Explain basic pharmacological and pharmacokinetic principles as they relate to devising a proper therapeutic regimen.
- Select an appropriate therapeutic treatment plan for a given patient condition.
- Determine appropriate use for new pharmacologic agents.

Click Here for More Information or to Register

FHEA is on Twitter!

Following the FHEA Twitter page will provide you with up-to-date information on our course offerings and products. You can also use the FHEA Twitter to interact with us at our live courses, start conversations with your nurse practitioner colleagues, and discuss the latest in healthcare news.

Click Here for More Information
**Live on Arrival**

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**Come see us in person!**
We will be exhibiting at the following locations:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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| April 11-14, 2013 | National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties  39th Annual Meeting  
                    | Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania                                                  |
| April 17-20, 2013 | Kentucky Coalition of Nurse Practitioners  and Nurse Midwives  
                    | Lexington, Kentucky                                                      |
| May 1-4, 2013     | National Conference for Nurse Practitioners Annual Meeting  
                    | Nashville, Tennessee                                                    |

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**A Sample of Dr. Fitzgerald’s Upcoming Speaking Engagements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| April 11-14, 2013 | National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties  
                    | 600 Commonwealth Place Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania                                              |
| April 26, 2013    | Illinois Society for  
                    | Advanced Practice Nursing Pharmacology Update Bourbannais, Illinois                         |
| May 1-4, 2013     | National Conference for Nurse Practitioners  
                    | Nashville, Tennessee                                                                |
As you study, please keep in mind that the NP certification examination tests your ability to know the following:

- Why a patient is at risk for a problem.
- How a clinical problem has developed.
- What is the most likely clinical presentation of the condition?
- Why a given intervention is effective.
- How that intervention works.
- What is the most likely clinical outcome?
- Why this clinical problem is of significance to the overall healthcare system.

Therefore, a poor approach to preparing for the exam and practice is to memorize information so you know what to do but not why you are doing it, in both the exam room and as part of the larger healthcare system. A better approach to preparing for the exam and practice is to understand concepts and apply knowledge so you know what to do and why you are doing it. The FHEA NP Certification Examination Review and Advanced Practice Update prepares you in the why, how and what of NP practice, while helping to prepare you for success on the NP boards.

**How much time should I allow to prepare for my examination?**

This issue of time needed for certification preparation is unique to each exam candidate. That said, one of the major pitfalls in study is the failure to put aside the time to prepare. Map out the demands on your time in the first months after completing your NP program, including work hours, family, personal and professional commitments, as well as time you have perhaps set aside for a well-deserved vacation. After doing this, set up a schedule of study time, allot a greater amount of time to areas of knowledge deficit and less to areas of where you only need to refresh your knowledge base. Make sure you cover all areas listed as possible exam content. Plan your date for certification only after a period of well-planned, systematic certification-focused study.

**How should I organize my study time?**

Consider using an NP review course as the start of your study. Dates and locations for the FHEA NP Certification Exam and Advanced Practice Update course can be found here: [http://fhea.com/store/browselive.aspx?id=2](http://fhea.com/store/browselive.aspx?id=2). This program is also available on audio CDs, live on-line, or on-line recordings, more information can be found at: [http://fhea.com/Store/browserecordings.aspx?id=2](http://fhea.com/Store/browserecordings.aspx?id=2). The Fitzgerald Method of NP review starts with a summary of the vast body of knowledge needed for evidence-based NP practice and to successfully pass the NP boards. This summary is followed by sample practice questions to help you hone your clinical decision-making and test-taking skills.

Allow a minimum of 4-6 weeks of planned study post review course to maximize your likelihood of success on this important high-stakes exam. Sit down with your calendar and develop a study schedule, 2-3 hours at a time, 5-6 days per week, giving yourself one day off a week so you do not feel trapped or overwhelmed. Then analyze what you have already reviewed, noting your stronger and weaker points. For example, if you really understand all the cardiac information and the NP review course was truly review, then you are set in this portion of your study. If you are still struggling with thyroid issues, then you know you need additional study in that area. While this seems obvious, often people who are studying for a high-stakes exam gravitate back to the familiar as it is comforting to review what you know. Mark your areas of review to the schedule, i.e. - Monday night, 7-9 p.m., I will study thyroid disease using the Fitzgerald book and FHEA review materials; Tuesday, 4-7 p.m., I will review health promotion using my class notes from my NP program as well as the Fitzgerald resources. If you plan out that well, you will have a great handle on the test and, as importantly, your new practice.

In addition to putting aside the time, setting up a system of study can further enhance the success of a review session. One method is the SQ4R system, where the study information is surveyed to established goals.

- **Questions about the information** are formulated. What do you need to learn about this topic so that you have a firm grasp on the concepts? Are you able to consider the pathophysiology of a condition, how this manifests in the clinical presentation, and how a given intervention modifies or corrects the disease process?
- **Read** to answer these questions. Study background information so you can correctly answer the questions above.
- **Recite** the responses to the original questions. Consider writing up a short summary of what you have learned from your study.
- **Review** to see if the original goals were met.

*At this point, a series of practice exam questions is a great way to wrap up your study on a topic and demonstrate your mastery of the information. Post study, you should be scoring in the 85-100% range on practice questions. Use practice questions to wrap up, not start, your NP certification review. If you are not scoring well on practice questions, you need additional study of the content area associated with those questions.*

(Study Plan: Continued on page 9)
A Sample of Upcoming Speaking Engagements for FHEA Lecturers

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>FHEA Lecturers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1-4, 2013</td>
<td>National Conference for Nurse Practitioners</td>
<td>Gaylord Opryland Resort &amp; Convention Center, Nashville, Tennessee</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/09/2013</td>
<td>8-9:30 p.m. EST</td>
<td>Cliff Ashley, MS, LATC</td>
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<td>Bruce Askey, MS, ANP-BC</td>
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<td>Linda Blasen, MS, ACNP-BC, FNP-BC</td>
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<td>Victor Czerkasij, MA, MS, FNP-BC</td>
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<td>Susan Feeney, MS, NP-C, FNP-BC</td>
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<td>Richard Fletcher, MS, FNP-BC</td>
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<td>Louise McDevitt, MS, ACNP-BC, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP</td>
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<td>Monica Tombasco, MS, MSNA, FNP-BC, CRNA</td>
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<td>Sally Miller, PhD, ACNP-BC, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, CNE, FAANP</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Christy Yates, MS, FNP-BC, NP-C, AE-C</td>
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Getting Ready for the NP Certification Exam

A FREE Live On-line Presentation

Join Dr. Margaret A. Fitzgerald for a free, 75-minute live on-line presentation on certification exam preparation and comparisons between the exams. Learn the best practices for preparing for certification and what to expect on the exams with this webinar designed for NP students, recent NP grads and practicing NPs who are not certified.

Available Dates

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<tr>
<td>10/14/2013</td>
<td>8-9:30 p.m. EST</td>
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Click Here for More Information or to Register
(Study Plan: Continued from page 7)

What about forming a study group?
Study groups can be helpful and are a terrific vehicle for sharing information and resources. Alternatively, study groups can yield a poor return on time invested if all members are not similarly committed. I hear about study groups that meet in person as well as groups who use technology such as Skype to meet. Here are some guidelines for forming a successful study group.

All group members must treat attendance and participation as they would any other professional commitment, such as work or school. Well in advance, set a schedule, place and time to meet, as well as a topic for the meeting. Plan a start and end time, with a clear objective for the session. Study groups usually work best when a group member volunteers to research and present information on a subject at a predetermined schedule. The presentation is typically followed with a discussion of the issue and review of sample exam questions and rationales for the correct response. The leader of a given session should also assume responsibility for keeping the discussion on track, facilitating the efficient use of time and resources.

In order to help avoid the group deteriorating into a chat session, plan for a short period of socialization following high-yield study sessions. Here is an example of a session planned by a highly successful study group with three members, Sarah, Ben and Helena.

"The session will start at 7 p.m. and end at 9 p.m. with the objective of identifying the clinical presentation, assessment and intervention in community-acquired pneumonia. Sarah is the presenter and also group-leader for the evening and is responsible for keeping us on track. A social period from 9-9:30 p.m. will follow. We will meet at Helena’s apartment. Ben is responsible for refreshments."

I feel anxious just thinking about the NP certification exam!
Stress yields anxiety, anxiety yields stress; one can be viewed as the product of the other. The stress of preparing for an important exam triggers the sympathetic nervous system (SNS). With this SNS activation, the NP is focused during study. This is a helpful and normal response to preparing for a high-stakes test.

However, protracted stress can be exhausting and contributes to a lack of focus and difficulty studying and test-taking. Learn a relaxation technique to use prior to studying or test taking. Start the session by reading or repeating a positive message about being successful on the exam. Avoid excessive amounts of caffeinated beverages that can add to anxious feelings. Eat a light but nourishing meal containing complex carbohydrates, fruit and/or vegetables, and high quality protein to feed the body and mind prior to your study as well as the test. Avoid eating energy-sapping foods that include excessive refined sugars and fat. Importantly, so-called energy drinks and the like are typically loaded with caffeine and sugar, substances can negatively impact your ability to focus and should be avoided prior to study or the boards.

The night before your test date, plan to spend a quiet evening reviewing a few crucial last points. Avoid cramming for the examination. Respect the work you have put into your NP studies by getting a good night’s sleep.

What study resources do you recommend using?
You likely have some helpful resources on hand. In particular, take out your health assessment text and use it to review health history taking and differentiating normal from abnormal physical examination findings. Here is a list of additional resources that will help in your exam preparation and practice.

All resources listed are available to review and purchase at live FHEA NP Certification Review and Advance Practice Update courses as well as online at www.fhea.com/store.

A resource that will be helpful in developing test-taking skills:

Dr. Fitzgerald’s comprehensive study guide for NP review featuring more than 1,400 sample questions and 160 quick-look tables:

(Study Plan: Continued on page 10)
Additional sources of practice questions for the family and adult NP certification examinations:


Additional sources of practice questions for the acute care NP certification examination:


Resources which are particularly helpful for NPs sitting for specialty boards including the gerontological, women’s health and pediatric NP exams as well as the family, adult and adult-gero NP candidates who would like additional practice questions in specific areas:


A helpful resource for honing high level assessment and differential diagnosis skills:


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**Customer Service Notice**

At FHEA, we sometimes receive complaints or concerns from customers who have purchased FHEA products or Dr. Fitzgerald’s book, now in its 3rd edition, from other on-line vendors and second-hand sellers. Of course, that’s what free enterprise is all about but it also means buyer beware. Often the prices on these offers look good. However, what is being offered is either obsolete (there are newer, up-to-date editions available) or the product is incomplete (these products don’t include NP review workbooks or access to the on-line materials and lectures that are an integral part of the product). This can be a problem with all forms of the product whether they be printed, recorded, or e-book formats.

To be certain you are getting the complete and latest editions of Fitzgerald products, please shop through our store. When you do, our customer service personnel will be happy to ensure your satisfaction and we stand behind the products.

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**Contact Hour Tracker**

Never lose track of your certification, professional license and contact hour data again!

Thousands of your colleagues have already discovered this time-saving tool. Contact Hour Tracker is a no-cost internet service available on FHEA’s NP Expert website.

- Store all your certification and license documentation dates and CE requirements.
- Keep track of all your continuing education hours as they occur.
- Contact Hour Tracker logs FHEA earned contact hours automatically.
- Enter contact hours from any CE provider.
- Monitor deadlines and CE requirements for multiple agencies.
- Track your progress toward contact hour goals.
- Set up electronic “alarm clocks” to receive automatic e-mail reminders for all upcoming license and certification renewal dates.
- Print contact hour summaries by category and source to help complete certification and license renewal paperwork.

Go to [www.fhea.com/npxpert](http://www.fhea.com/npxpert) to register.
(Study Plan: Continued from page 10)

A helpful overall guide to primary care NP practice:

A comprehensive guide to diagnostic imaging and laboratory diagnosis that uses an algorithmic approach to choosing the best study:

A clear, concise guide to laboratory diagnosis that uses an algorithmic approach to choosing the best lab test:

Fully illustrated in a unique format, this is one of the clinical resources I find most helpful in my practice:

The “go-to” guide on the science and art of prescribing contraception:

Two helpful guides for GYN care:

A must-have resource for practice with nursing moms:


**Conclusion**

Successfully passing your certification exam not only marks a critical rite of passage, but also tangible evidence of your considerable achievement. Make sure you do all that is possible to maximize your likelihood of success.

[Click here for a full list of Fitzgerald Health’s NP Certification Exam Review and Advance Practice Update Courses](http://fhea.com/)
The Art of Wound Repair: Suturing for NPs and PAs

Presented by: Robert Blumm, MA, PA-C, DFAAPA

June 15, 2013
Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel
6401 South 13th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53221

June 24, 2013
Los Angeles, California

Earn 6 Contact Hours!

The art of suturing is the process of preparation, thinking, documentation, taking a good history and physical examination, immunizing our patient, delivering proper local anesthesia, in addition to performing a professional suture. This full-day course features the utilization of a pig's foot, anesthesia tips, 4-0 nylon suture, and a disposable stapler. Dermabond and other products will be covered. We will start with the key stone stitch, and will move on to running sutures, horizontal mattress sutures, vertical mattress sutures, and running in-cuticular stitches. Malpractice prevention techniques will help secure your future.

Advanced Pathophysiology for NPs and Advanced Practice Clinicians

Presented by: Margaret A. Fitzgerald, DNP, FNP-BC, NP-C, FAANP, CSP, FAAN, DCC
Sally K. Miller, PhD, ACNP-BC, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, CNE, FAANP

This course is scheduled live annually and is always available on-line. Contact hours for the on-line course differ from the live course.

Earn 45 Contact Hours!

This course is review and updated bi-annually to ensure up-to-date content. It is presented by highly acclaimed clinician-educators who currently maintain clinical practice. Fitzgerald Health brings the highest quality pathophysiology program to our customers. We believe our approach provides an advanced pathophysiology course that will meet your needs whether you are new to the profession or brushing up your pathophysiology. This course is also available on-line. (Contact hours differ from the live course.)

Clinical Pharmacology for NPs and Advanced Practice Clinicians

Presented by: Margaret A. Fitzgerald, DNP, FNP-BC, NP-C, FAANP, CSP, FAAN, DCC
Sally K. Miller, PhD, ACNP-BC, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, GNP-BC, CNE, FAANP

This course is scheduled live annually and is always available on-line. Contact hours for the on-line course differ from the live course.

Earn 45 Contact Hours!

This course addresses the growing need for a thorough course in the principles of pharmacotherapeutics. Because states’ requirements vary, it is important that you contact your state board of nursing for details regarding educational requirements for prescriptive authority. This course is also available on-line. (Contact hours differ from the live course.)

Click here for more information about these and other courses