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Psychometrics and the Future of the Critical Thinking Self-Assessment Scale

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Abstract

Critical thinking is a necessary skill in many professions. Indeed, it is a curricular requirement within many accreditation guidelines for health professions educational programs. Current critical thinking instruments are frequently high cost, with results that are not consistent across studies. This instrument was developed as a tool to assist students and others to measure their critical thinking skills and activities using the theoretical construct of critical thinking described by Facione et al. (1991). Facione and colleagues identified six core cognitive skills and 16 sub-skills to make up the process of critical thinking. The original scale had 10 items for each of the sub-skills. Prior research reduced the total items from 160 to 115, using nursing student samples from India and Canada. The current research with 712 UNMC nursing students resulted in a 46 item instrument that contains two to three items for each sub-skill. Internal consistency reliability values are over .7 across all subscales, and there was convergent validity with the Need for Cognition Scale. Students can use this tool to identify their strengths and skills to improve, leading to stronger critical thinking. Future research efforts will focus on using the tool with additional health sciences students, longitudinal analyses and development and testing of strategies to improve critical thinking skills in areas of identified weakness.

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