NCS Examination Study Tools
Update:  September 2013

The resources that follow cover many different areas of content that may be helpful for those studying to take the NCS examination. To optimize preparation for this exam, it is recommended that each individual self-assess his/ her own professional development needs within the specialty of neurologic physical therapy and select content / resources that would enhance learning in deficient areas. This self-assessment is key, and serves as an important first step to professional development at the level that is expected of a neurologic clinical specialist.

• The American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) coordinates and oversees the Specialist Certification process, and serves as the governing body for certification and recertification of clinical specialists. You will find study resources this group has identified if you scroll to the bottom of the page available at this link:
  http://www.abpts.org/Certification /Neurology/

• The Neurology Section website provides educational content and links to other documents and websites that may be helpful when studying for the NCS exam. The Section’s home page can be found at:
  http://www.neuropt.org

  The links to this website that are provided below may be especially relevant for NCS exam preparation:

  o There is a Neurologic Specialist Certification tab available on this website at:
    http://www.neuropt.org/professional-resources/neurologic-specialist-certification/ncs-resources

    Here, you will find:
    o A link to information on the NCS Exam content outline
    o A link to the NCS Resource List:

    The Section’s NCS Committee has developed a list of resources to assist with preparation for the Neurologic Certified Specialist exam. The committee solicited suggestions about useful references from recently certified specialists, and has compiled a list of journal articles, textbooks and APTA publications.

  o Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy
    http://www.neuropt.org/about-us/the-journal-of-neurologic-physical-therapy

    At this link, you can learn about the Neurology Section’s official, Medline indexed journal, which provides current literature and supplemental content addressing a broad range of neurorehabilitation topics. The official journal website is available at:
    http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/pages/default.aspx

  o Evidence Based Neurologic Practice:
    http://www.neuropt.org/professional-resources/evidence-based-neurologic-practice

    This link provides a list of sources to access search engines and databases containing current literature relevant to neurorehabilitation.
Neurologic Special Interest Groups
http://www.neuropt.org/special-interest-groups
There are six special interest groups within the Section, including Balance and Falls, Brain Injury, Degenerative Diseases, Spinal Cord Injury, Stroke, and Vestibular Rehabilitation. Each group has posted resources and current documents relevant to that specific health condition. If you lack clinical experience within one of these practice areas of neurorehabilitation, you may find these Special Interest Group documents to be helpful in guiding your studying.

Neurology Section Mentorship Program
http://www.neuropt.org/professional-resources/mentorship
The Neurology Section is working to empower new professionals to take personal responsibility for their development and education through the support of an experienced and established neurologic physical therapist mentor. Information on this process is available at this link.

• The APTA Learning Center: http://learningcenter.apta.org/
APTA’s Learning Center provides access to many online continuing education opportunities relevant to the NCS examination. Here, you will find recorded presentations from national meetings (Combined Sections Meeting and Annual Conference) and many online courses that were originally create by FA Davis from their textbook resources. Courses on neurology-related topics can be found at the following link:
  
  o http://learningcenter.apta.org/Courses.aspx
    Type neurology in the search window to review the courses available, all of which are specific to neurorehabilitation
  o http://learningcenter.apta.org/tp_topic.aspx
    Select neurology from the topics list to see a diverse listing of both broad and specific topics having relevance to the neurologic physical therapist

PLEASE NOTE: there is some overlap of instructional offerings between the listings available at these two links

• Description of Specialty Practice (DSP): Neurologic and Self-Assessment Tool booklet published by the ABPTS and the Specialty Council on Neurologic Physical Therapy; The Description of Specialty Practice: Neurologic serves as the basis for the specialist certification exams and is a valuable aid in determining your readiness for specialist certification. This tool is available for purchase through APTA’s Online Store with a reduced price for Section members; price includes Self-Assessment Tool booklet. Available at:
  
  http://iweb.apta.org/Purchase/ProductDetail.aspx?Product_code=KIT-NEURO&LI=0

  o Note to Specialist Applicants: As part of your application fee for board certification, you will receive the DSP: Neurologic and Self-Assessment Tool—so there is no need to order this separately!

• NCS Exam Study Groups: When completing the Specialist Certification application to take the NCS examination, you have an option to request participation in an exam study group. Contact information of other applicants within your geographic region will be provided to you as a service
run through the APTA Specialist Certification Program / American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties.

• **Neurology Section Outcome Measures Recommendations**
  
  o The Neurology Section has supported the development of recommendations for outcome measures used in clinical practice, research, and entry level physical therapist education. Currently, the Section has completed recommendations for use of outcome measures in people with stroke, multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injury. Test descriptions and psychometric properties are included as part of these recommendations. [http://www.neuropt.org/professional-resources/neurology-section-outcome-measures-recommendations](http://www.neuropt.org/professional-resources/neurology-section-outcome-measures-recommendations)

  o Outcome measure recommendations for use with individuals with vestibular dysfunction and Parkinson’s disease are currently being developed by Section members.

  o Additional content addressing neurologic outcome measures is available through the following resources:
    

• **Neurology Section Continuing Education Courses**: The Neurology Section offers a wide variety of continuing education courses addressing content that has been specifically designed for the neurorehabilitation physical therapy practitioner. In all courses, participants are asked to apply learning concepts to specific patient cases.

  o Some course selections provide foundational content essential to neurologic clinical practice; for example:
    
    o Neurologic Practice Essentials: A Measurement Toolbox
    o Neurologic Practice Essentials: Clinical Decision Making as a Foundation for Expert Practice
    o Neurologic Practice Essentials: Clinical Application of the Principles of Neuroplasticity to Maximize Patient Outcomes

  o Courses focused on more advanced or topic-specific content are also available. Current course selections include:
    
    o Expanding Neurologic Expertise: Introduction to Vestibular Rehabilitation
    o Expanding Neurologic Expertise: Advancing Clinical Practice in Acute Stroke Rehabilitation).
    o Expanding Neurologic Expertise: Advanced Practice in Vestibular Physical Therapy

The dates and locations of upcoming offerings can be found on the Neurology Section website: [http://www.neuropt.org/education/neurology-section-developed-courses](http://www.neuropt.org/education/neurology-section-developed-courses)
• Baylor College of Medicine—Department of Neurology: Case of the Month
  http://www.bcm.edu/neurology/case.cfm
  - Although designed as an interactive site for Baylor’s medical residents, this website offers the physical therapist a wide variety of neurologic case examples to explore. Many of these cases involve patients with more complicated or unusual diagnoses/clinical presentations. Patient history and exam data are provided. The clinical summary of the patient’s examination findings gives insight into how the medical diagnosis was reached and the differential diagnoses that might have been considered. Post-test questions allow the reader to consider the take-away messages considered to be most important in each case.

• NeuroLogic Examination Videos and Descriptions: An Anatomical Approach (University of Utah)
  http://library.med.utah.edu/neurologicexam/html/home_exam.html
  - This website offers an online tutorial on the anatomical foundations of the neurologic examination. Through examples of normal and abnormal patient conditions, a functional neuroanatomical approach to clinical decision making is illustrated. This website offers anatomical information and videos in the areas of mental status examination, cranial nerve exams, coordination, sensory, motor, and gait examinations. Pediatric neurologic examination videos and descriptions are also available through the same website.

• Neurology Cases to accompany NeuroLogic Exam: University of Utah
  http://library.med.utah.edu/neurologicexam/cases/home_cases.html
  - This is a companion website to the previous site on this resource list; it is designed to lead participants through a systematic decision making process on four separate clinical cases. Patient history is augmented by video clips highlighting different aspects of the neurologic examination, including mental status, cranial nerve, coordination, sensory, motor, and gait examinations.