



COMPREHENSIVE LACTATION CONSULTANT

EXAM REVIEW

FIFTH EDITION

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Dedication

This *Fifth Edition* is dedicated to:

Nursing mothers and babies worldwide;

Hannah, my daughter. As a baby, she taught me mothering in ways no book could. I watch with pride and awe as she nurtures her daughter Carrie through infancy and beyond;

Carrie, Hannah's daughter. As a new mother herself, she swims easily, comfortably, and joyously in the sea of motherhood; and

Rose, Carrie's daughter. She is thriving in the loving, freewheeling, open-arms embrace of three generations of mothering through breastfeeding.

Watching Hannah, Carrie, and Rose grow and thrive is the culmination of my life's work and fills me with profound and heartfelt joy. They—and you, the Reader—are my legacy.



Rose and her mother Carrie

Courtesy of Carrie Boswell.

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Introduction

The lactation consultant profession celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2020, despite being in the midst of a global pandemic. An idea that began with 250 candidates taking the first exam in two countries has grown to over 3,000 candidates per year taking the exam in 17 languages across 72 countries and territories. As of early 2022, there were 34,000 certificants in 129 countries and territories.

The fifth edition of *Comprehensive Lactation Consultant Exam Review* expands on the previous editions with over 1,100 practice questions, 20 case studies with questions, and more than 500 clinical photos. Every question has been reviewed, sometimes revised, referenced, and mapped to the 2016 and 2023 *Detailed Content Outlines*. This book is designed to give exam candidates practice in answering multiple-choice questions typical of the questions found on the examination administered by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE). None of these questions has been submitted to IBLCE for possible use, and all were created by the author or an IBCLC contributor.

Preparing for the IBLCE Exam includes information about the exam layout, successful study and preparation strategies, and an expanded set of clinical exercises based on the 2023 *Detailed Content Outline*. The clinical exercises for each discipline help the student explore a variety of aspects of lactation consultant practice. Some research suggests that candidates who complete clinical exercises and analyze the effects on their practice of doing the exercises may perform better on the exam. My experience is that students who use the exercises, either independently or as part of an organized preparation program, to explore a wide variety of lactation consultant activities are enriched, enhanced, and excited by the process.

Chapters 1–7 are practice questions based on the disciplines in the 2023 *Detailed Content Outline*. In this book, each question has been mapped to one discipline, one chronological period, and one of the nine task categories, which are included in the answer sections. Each question's "degree of difficulty"

rating is based on how closely the incorrect answers approximate the correct answers. The difficulty rating is calculated from the mix of "obviously wrong" choices and "wrong-but-close" choices: The higher the difficulty rating, the harder the question. The average passing grade in recent years has been in the 70% to 75% range.

Chapter 8 is a new feature: a set of multiple-choice questions based on the 2018 WHO-UNICEF BFHI *Competency Verification Toolkit* competencies and performance indicators. These were created entirely for this book. The entire *Competency Verification Toolkit*, including the original international multiple-choice questions, can be found at www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240008854.

Chapter 9: Case Studies with Practice Questions presents 20 clinical case studies with several multiple-choice questions based on each case. Although this format (a long case with several associated questions) is not used on the IBLCE exam, it allows more in-depth analysis of the body of knowledge required to help the mother and baby in each case and more closely simulates situations encountered in actual practice. All of the clinical case studies in this book are actual situations contributed by lactation consultants, with identifying details changed to maintain client confidentiality.

The online interactive testing program has two complete practice exams with pictures. The distribution and number of questions in each discipline and chronological period are balanced to conform to the 2016 and 2023 *Detailed Content Outlines*, which are derived from an analysis of skills, knowledge, and abilities of practicing lactation consultants. Common functions and activities of lactation consultants were examined for frequency of use in practice and criticality of that function or activity to breastfeeding success. Knowledge, skills, and abilities that are used more frequently or are more critical to lactation success are more heavily weighted in the exam content outline. Therefore, the number of questions per discipline and chronological period on the practice exams are based on the relative importance of that topic and period in actual clinical practice.

Every attempt has been made to include questions that relate to the wide body of knowledge that is tested on the IBLCE exam. All questions have been referenced to the published peer-reviewed professional literature, and an extensive bibliography is included in the appendix.

Preparing for the IBLCE Exam

When studying, you should use the most current editions of widely available texts and research articles published in relevant professional journals. If one reference appears to contradict another, look carefully for the common ground, or examine the primary research on the topic. The exam will test the most critical and frequently used principles of supporting breastfeeding families, not esoteric trivia. Some research articles can be downloaded in their entirety from the online version of peer-reviewed journals for free; others charge a fee. Abstracts are available for free online. Most medical libraries provide public access to a wide selection of the journals cited.

- Knowledge areas are found in the suggested readings and bibliographies.
- Skills are learned through experience, preferably supervised, and indirectly tested by the questions with accompanying photographs.
- Attitudes are difficult to assess using multiple-choice examination, yet are central to effective breastfeeding care. Listening to mothers' concerns and experiences is vital to understanding the supportive attitudes that emerge in the sample questions.
- The clinical exercises will help develop skills and deepen your understanding of each discipline, especially the exercises that involve interviewing or observing mothers and babies.

The practice questions may include signs and symptoms of various diseases, therapeutic treatments including antibiotics and other prescription medications, and other information related to the overall health or medical condition of the lactating mother or breastfed child. Inclusion of this information does not imply that the lactation consultant, on the basis of IBCLC certification alone, is qualified or legally allowed to diagnose medical conditions or recommend, prescribe, or determine medical treatments of the mother or child.

Although this book is intended to help candidates prepare for the IBLCE exam, no guarantees of passing the IBLCE exam are expressed or implied. This book is intended to augment lactation management or exam preparation textbooks and courses, not replace them. Students in lactation management courses often find that coursework focuses their study, validates existing knowledge, and identifies weak areas. The book can be used as a guide for self-study, the formation of study groups, or to supplement academic courses.

Because the IBLCE exam is administered in more than 70 countries and translated into 17 or more languages, this book is intended to be used globally in many cultures and contexts. The overall terminology used is that of internationally respected peer-reviewed science journals and of global health policy documents. If a question involves an adult or adults other than the baby's mother, the wording of the question and answer reflects that change. Gender pronouns referring to the baby or babies were randomly selected or reflect the actual child or children in the question or photograph.

Finally, I made every attempt to include questions that cover the depth and breadth of topics that might be tested on the IBLCE exams. This book may over- or under-represent some topics tested on any given year's exam. New research will inevitably be published after this book is released that expands, deepens, or even replaces earlier understandings. Therefore, this book's questions, references, and exercises should be considered a guide and starting point for study, not the final word on any topic or concept. I am grateful to readers who contact me with comments, possible corrections, and suggestions. My email is lindaj@bflrc.com.

For more information and update, regarding IBLCE certification, contact www.iblce.org/about-iblce/worldwide-offices.

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About the Author

Linda J. Smith, MPH, IBCLC, FACCE, FILCA, is a lactation consultant, childbirth educator, author, and international consultant on breastfeeding and birthing issues. She was a founder of IBLCE, founder and past board member of ILCA, and serves on the United States Breastfeeding Committee. Her diverse background spans five decades of direct education and support for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers in nine cities in the United States and Canada. She has worked in hospital systems and local and state public health agencies, and supported colleagues with service on related associations' boards. Linda is an Adjunct Instructor in the Boonshoft School of Medicine at Wright State University in Dayton, OH, and has represented ILCA or LLLI to the World Health Organization's biannual meetings of BFHI Country Coordinators from Industrialized Countries since 2006. Linda is also a consultant to Baby-Friendly USA and INFACT Canada/IBFAN North America. She is

currently the owner and director of Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre (BFLRC), whose mission is "Supporting the People Who Support Breastfeeding" with lactation education programs, consulting services, and educational resources. BFLRC is on the Internet at www.BFLRC.org. She is the author of four professional textbooks on birth and breastfeeding, author or co-author of nine articles published in peer-reviewed journals, and co-writer of *Sweet Sleep* by La Leche League International. She has lectured in 19 countries; her presentations have been translated into 12 languages, including Chinese, Russian, and Inuktitut. She co-authored the 2018 WHO-UNICEF *Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Competency Verification Toolkit*. Her Lactation Management/Exam Preparation Course is the longest-running course of its kind, the first to be based on the IBLCE Detailed Content Outline, and has been presented to thousands of students in the past 30 years.

