Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing

EXCELLENCE in Nursing Education

Making teaching visible

by Linda M. Finke, Sharon L. Sims, Melinda M. Swenson

A common pitfall in teaching is that once you become a teacher, it is rare to observe colleagues as they function in a classroom, or to be observed yourself beyond a performance evaluation. Invisible processes often are not seen as tangible outcomes or as adding value to the bottom line.

If nurses could make teaching more visible to those interested in quality education for nursing, then patient, staff and student education could be of more value. Nursing education conversations should focus on how to publicize the diverse experiences in teaching and how to improve the learning environment.

During the past academic year a group of clinical and didactic teachers at the Indiana University School of Nursing (IUSON) met to explore aspects of teaching scholarship. The authors of this article have been the co-conveners of this group. Participants assessed best practices of teaching and learning, including an adaptation of the Stu & Stedman book. The book defines best practice in teaching as:

- encourages student-teacher contact,
- encourages cooperation among students (and teachers),
- not competition,
- encourages active and experiential learning,
- given prompt and making teaching visible.

How to write a case study for online education

by Pamela Jeffries

As electronic publishing becomes more prevalent in nursing and all health care professions, technology is shaping a new realm of educational opportunities. With Sigma Theta Tau's launch of the Online Case Studies for Nursing, nurses may participate not only as learners but also as authors of peer-reviewed case studies.

According to Teaching in Nursing: A Guide for Faculty, a case study is an in-depth analysis of a real-life situation as a way to illustrate content and theory to a participant. The case study is an opportunity for the learner to acquire cognitive reasoning, critical thinking and decision-making skills. Using the case study model, learners can problem solve in an environment without the threat of endangering a patient's health.

Selecting the Topic

Prior to writing an online case study, the author should select a topic that is focused, reality-based, relevant and reflects evidence of best practices in nursing. The topic can deal with a case scenario from a past nursing experience or one that highlights and emphasizes the scope of current nursing practice.

Writing Objectives

Once the topic is selected, the author needs to write at least three learning objectives or outcomes that reflect what the participant will learn from the case study.

An example of a learning objective:

At the conclusion of the case study, the learner will be able to:

Identify two common treatment modalities for symptomatic atrial fibrillation with an uncontrolled ventricular response.

Developing an Introduction

An introduction is one or two opening paragraphs that set the stage for the case study scenario. Within the introduction, the patient, symptoms and related circumstances of the situation may be described and may also present the history of the patient leading up to the events to be addressed in the scenario.

Creative literature supplements nursing

by Judy Stauffer

Why are a bartender and a military public affairs officer serving as the visiting professors in an English class taught by a registered nurse? "Writing in the Humanities," a 200-level English course at the Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg Campus includes reading from traditional writers such as William Butler Yeats and Mark Twain. The addition of a bartender with a passion for the history of rare comic books and a public affairs officer with journalistic and public relations skills provides a broad spectrum of students for learning about multiple writing styles in the humanities.

And why would nursing students be studying creative writing? Nurses may find literature to be a form of artistic expression. Including creative writing experiences in nursing education programs helps prepare nurses in all areas of practice for future creative endeavors.

Nurses and creative writing

There are many examples of published, creative nurse authors.

Correction

In the April issue of Excellence in Nursing Education, Florence Nightingale's birthday was incorrectly cited as May 6. Her birthday is on May 12, the conclusion of Nurses Week each year.
MAKING TEACHING VISIBLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

constructive feedback,
• emphasizes efficient use of time for teachers and learners,
• and respects diverse talents and ways of learning and teaching.

The group’s work has included brainstorming possible approaches to classroom research. The group focused on small, local projects relevant to individual teaching environments that would use simple, realistic and experience-focused questions about teaching and learning. Members helped one another think through how students and teachers would benefit from the inquiry, and how they could be included in it. The group discussed project designs and data management strategies.

Seminar participants presented current innovations used in their classrooms, and the group cited ways to evaluate and modify these methods. Suggestions related to creative approaches to student evaluations, including dyad testing, reflective self-evaluation, take-home tests, and oral examinations. These strategies are currently used in undergraduate and graduate programs at IUSON, and are valued by teachers because they de-emphasize competition among students, and reduce test anxiety and the tendency to privilege grades over learning.

Several faculty at IUSON are exploring ways to use testing as an additional learning experience rather than as just a way to require students to memorize and regurgitate content. The Narrative Centered Curriculum, developed for the family nurse practitioner major at IUSON, is an example of an entire program focused on helping students recognize and learn from the literature, rather than prescribing exactly what content to study.

Problem-based learning has been incorporated into the nursing administration curriculum as a way to engage graduate students at different levels of expertise and hold them responsible for their own learning.

Reading, writing and talking about teaching and learning experience more teaching more visible and available for public discussion and critique. For some, this approach is new and even a bit frightening, given the individual attitude that teaching is not open to scrutiny or criticism. It is unusual for any teacher to observe other colleagues as they teach, or to have them teach together. Teaching partnerships may be advantageous, particularly in courses where it is important for students to be exposed to more than one point of view. Teaching partners help one another before, during and after a teaching experience. Dialogue between teaching partners is both supportive and critical, with partners offering encouragement, constructive critique and helpful suggestions for change and modification.

CREATIVE LITERATURE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a publishing company, Vista, in Long Branch, N.J. Creative writing has been successfully incorporated into medical education tracks at the Penn State University College of Medicine and its branches. For 20 years, Willard & Spence, a literary journal by the university’s medical students, has been published annually. A Center for the Humanities with a multidiscipline humanities curriculum was funded through an endowment by Drs. Lawrence Kienle and the late Jane Kienle.

Creating a voice for nurse writers

Elaine Scarry suggests in The Body in Pain that an individual experiencing and observing pain cannot fully verbalize the experience. This is a dilemma for nurses and other caregivers who observe and at times cause discomfort through their curative and healing processes.

Courage to speak and write one’s mind is important to nurses who are writing creatively. Literature can serve as a release and positive communications vehicle for nurses to share the experiences of their caregiving.

Literary devices can assist nursing students in gathering data and making a diagnosis, planning, implementing, evaluating, and repeating the nursing process.

For non-nurses, literary devices also are tools to describe, diagnose and frame their world.

A nursing student in my course says, “I never had an English class that used nursing readings as the material on nursing.... The stories and poems by nurses made me realize the impact that nurses and patients have on each other.” Another nursing student says, “These poems helped me better understand poetry.”

The group gives participants the opportunity to share ideas for feedback and expansion, to practice presenting innovative work and to offer manuscripts for informal review and critique. Similar groups could also provide the opportunity to collaborate and create new work at journals and committees aimed at producing tangible evidence of teaching scholarship, such as newsletter articles, teaching tips prepared for clinics, and new teaching/learning articles. Teachers can share course outlines and syllabi, materials developed for patient education and strategies for evaluating learning outcomes.

Teachers in all settings can engage in discussion and public sharing regarding their teaching and the ways in which they are improving learning. Making teaching projects open and available for comment and review creates openings for new conversations about education—conversations that will influence future improvements in the health of patients and their families.

The authors of this article are faculty members at Indiana University School of Nursing: Judy Schaefer, RNC, MA, is the director of Leadership Academy at Indiana University School of Nursing, Indianapolis, Ind.; Linda M. Finch, RN, PhD, is a professor of nursing and Sharon L. Sims, RNCS, PhD, FNP, and Melinda M. Savore, RNCS, PhD, FNP, are associate professors of nursing.

Collaboration

Collaboration and peer review were important components of my class. While professional collaboration is not new or limited to nursing—many professions encourage collaborative writing. For example, undergraduate courses may find it challenging to collaborate on projects. If achievement predominantly recognized individual effort, group work looks suspiciously like “cheating,” a barrier that must be worked through if collaboration is to be successful. Sharing insights through criticizing fellow students’ work contributed to peer support and was appreciated by the students. One student said, “I enjoyed the peer review in the class” (Diago) that for our research proposals was one of the most worthwhile things I’ve ever done in a humanities/liberal arts class.”

For more information and a downloadable newsletter, go to www.excellenceine.com.

EXCELLENCE IN NURSING EDUCATION • July 2000

www.nursingsociety.org

For more information, see the July 2000 edition of Nursing Outlook at www.nursingsociety.org.
Career profiles in nursing education

Name: Christine Ateah, RN, PhD
Title: Assistant Professor
Employer: University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Years in Nursing: 23

Three favorite aspects of job:
• Research in areas of interest
• Teaching enthusiastic students
• Working with enthusiastic and knowledgeable colleagues

Three challenging aspects of job:
• Finding time to do everything I want to do professionally
• Balancing home and work lives
• Teaching in new areas

Job description:
Teach and advise students in the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, conduct research and participate in committee and community activities. My primary research interest is parenting education and child abuse prevention.

Christine Ateah is one member whose career is profiled on our new Web site, Career Profiles in Nursing, at nursingsociety.org/career. This site offers society members, students and others interested in a nursing career insight into the many career opportunities: administration, clinical practice, pediatric nursing, research and education. It links you directly with each person and the universities from which they graduated. Visit the site today to ask these nurses questions through e-mail and explore the world of nursing.

Nursing consortium awarded Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant

Preparation of nurses to meet the future demands of population-based health care systems is the driving force for a consortium of the nation’s leading nursing organizations. This collaboration, the Nursing Practice and Education Consortium (N-PEC), recently received funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support the development of a strategic plan for restructuring nursing education and practice. Members of N-PEC have been working together for a two-year span and are committed to partnering in this strategic planning process. Members include:
• AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF NURSING
• AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSE EXECUTIVE
• AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
• NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING
• SIGMA THETA TAU INTERNATIONAL

The group recently met in Chicago to present a draft strategic plan to a blue-ribbon panel of experts representing higher education, nursing education and practice, and health administration and policy. The plan outlines development of a model of nursing education and practice that addresses aligning level of education with needs of specific populations in health care delivery systems.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funding allows the group to conduct three meetings this year to identify actions, seek external expert advice and monitor its progress.

“Only by transforming nursing education and practice can we hope to produce graduates who are prepared to meet the expectations of population-based health care systems,” said Patricia E. Thompson, RN, EdD, president, Sigma Theta Tau International. “The health and care demands of diverse populations have left the profession of nursing with the responsibility of assuming a central role in helping to achieve cost-effective, quality health services.”

Christine Ateah is one member whose career is profiled on our new Web site, Career Profiles in Nursing, at nursingsociety.org/career. This site offers society members, students and others interested in a nursing career insight into the many career opportunities: administration, clinical practice, pediatric nursing, research and education. It links you directly with each person and the universities from which they graduated. Visit the site today to ask these nurses questions through e-mail and explore the world of nursing.

Don’t lose that number!
Keep your Sigma Theta Tau membership number handy when replying online or by fax, phone or mail. Please include your number on all correspondence, including e-mail, to allow us to quickly and efficiently access your membership information. You can change your number by calling: 1-888-634-7575 (U.S. and Canada), +1-317-634-6171, fax +1-317-634-6198, e-mail memserv@stti.iupui.edu or visit the Web site at nursingsociety.org/library.

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Christine Ateah is one member whose career is profiled on our new Web site, Career Profiles in Nursing, at nursingsociety.org/career. This site offers society members, students and others interested in a nursing career insight into the many career opportunities: administration, clinical practice, pediatric nursing, research and education. It links you directly with each person and the universities from which they graduated. Visit the site today to ask these nurses questions through e-mail and explore the world of nursing.

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Introducing Sigma Theta Tau International’s Online Literature Review for Nursing

The FAST, EASY way to keep up with the latest developments!

Clinical experts sift through more than 5,000 new articles each week listed in Medline® ... you receive concise e-mail bulletins identifying the most-useful articles in your pre-selected areas of interest.

Don’t lose that number!
Keep your Sigma Theta Tau membership number handy when replying online or by fax, phone or mail. Please include your number on all correspondence, including e-mail, to allow us to quickly and efficiently access your membership information. You can change your number by calling: 1-888-634-7575 (U.S. and Canada), +1-317-634-6171, fax +1-317-634-6198, e-mail memserv@stti.iupui.edu or visit the Web site at nursingsociety.org/library.

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Sigma Theta Tau International’s new Distinguished Writers Program provides chapters and individuals with seasoned writers who can help mentor and train aspiring nurse authors.

Two Ways to Use the Program
First, if you are looking to enhance your writing skills, the mentor format allows you to work one-on-one with a distinguished writer to develop articles, manuscripts and books for publication. Also, the workshop format allows your chapter to secure a mentor for chapter programming. If you would like more information on how to utilize this program, contact Melody Jones at Sigma Theta Tau headquarters by phone 888.634.7575 (U.S. and Canada) or e-mail melody@stti.iupui.edu. You may also visit the society’s Web site at nursingsociety.org/education.

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Incorporating Additional History/Background

By incorporating another paragraph or two, the author can expand on the introduction of the case scenario. Additional information may be included to add richness, clarify the case or expand on the background information given in the introduction. For example, laboratory or diagnostic results, physical assessment findings or additional information about the patient's history may be discussed, which provides supplementary information that allows the learner to have a clearer perception of the problem.

Example of additional background information:

Upon admission, Ms. Brown had ST-T wave changes in leads II, III, and AVF. Her lungs were clear to auscultation and she denies any pain or discomfort. Her monitor is showing Sinus Bradycardia, rate 54 without ectopy.

Developing Questions

One of the main features of the Online Case Studies will be interaction with the learner through questions developed by the author. The interactive questions should ask the learner to assess, plan, prioritize, implement, evaluate or anticipate an action. The interaction should be meaningful and stimulate cognitive activities such as critical thinking and decision making that are suitable to the learner. Questions should follow a process and motivate the learner to interact with the case study content. The questions can be used to stimulate recall of information or involve the learner in applying information.

An example of a multiple choice question:

1. As the nurse is performing the morning assessment, Mrs. Brown complains of feeling dizzy, light-headed, and slightly short of breath. When looking at her bedside monitor, the nurse sees the rhythm to the right.

What rhythm is currently appearing on her bedside monitor?

a. Atrial fibrillation with uncontrolled ventricular response
b. Atrial tachycardia
c. Atrial flutter with varying degrees of block
d. Sinus arrhythmia without ectopy

Providing Feedback

The answer to each question should provide feedback to the learners in both the correct and incorrect answer choices. Most case studies include two types of feedback: informational and reinforcing. Informational feedback is providing the learner with information about the progression through the program, if the answer is correct and providing rationale for the particular question. Reinforcing feedback provides information about the learner's response to a question, thus facilitating learning. When writing responses to the questions, the author needs to develop rationale for both correct and incorrect responses that are appropriate to the level of the learner.

An example of providing feedback within the answers:

a. Correct. The rhythm is atrial fibrillation because the wavy baseline configuration representing the atria that exists when the atria have become so irritable that multiple areas in the atria begin initiating depolarizing impulses. The ventricular response is uncontrolled since the heart rate is >150 bpm.

b. Incorrect. The rhythm is atrial tachycardia because the wavy baseline configuration representing the atria that exists when the atria have become so irritable that multiple areas in the atria begin initiating depolarizing impulses. The ventricular response is uncontrolled since the heart rate is >150 bpm.

c. Incorrect. The rhythm is atrial flutter because the wavy baseline configuration representing the atria that exists when the atria have become so irritable that multiple areas in the atria begin initiating depolarizing impulses. The ventricular response is uncontrolled since the heart rate is >150 bpm.

d. Incorrect. The rhythm is sinus arrhythmia because the wavy baseline configuration representing the atria that exists when the atria have become so irritable that multiple areas in the atria begin initiating depolarizing impulses. The ventricular response is uncontrolled since the heart rate is >150 bpm.

Online Case Studies are peer-reviewed case studies immediately applicable to practice.

Based on real life situations, the latest research, and current evidence, they provide points of care knowledge and information on decision-making skills necessary for managing complex health care situations including assessment, problem identification, formulating interventions, planning and managing care and evaluating outcomes.

Each case study is based on current evidence and standards, and is peer-reviewed by practicing nurse experts. Resources and references supporting the studies are at your fingertips to enhance your learning process. Also, by participating in a virtual global community you have access to topically chat forums, the ability to contact colleagues and opportunities to dialogue with the experts.

For questions about developing a case study or serving as a reviewer, contact Sigma Theta Tau at 1.888.634.7575, e-mail onlinece@stti.iupui.edu or via the Web site at nursingsociety.org.

Pamela Jeffries, RN, DNS, is an assistant professor at Indiana University School of Nursing, Indianapolis, Ind.

Earn contact hours online

Beginning this summer, registered nurses at any professional level or with diverse job responsibilities may earn continuing education credit through Sigma Theta Tau International's Online Case Studies for Nursing.

These self-study, interactive programs are peer-reviewed case studies immediately applicable to practice.

Based on real life situations, the latest research, and current evidence, they provide points of care knowledge and information on decision-making skills necessary for managing complex health care situations including assessment, problem identification, formulating interventions, planning and managing care and evaluating outcomes.

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Example of a reference:


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