The research question for this study: Is the efficacy for the use of a virtual community supported; as the source for gathering information necessary for completion of assignments, and thus achieving student learning outcomes?

**Introduction**

- Need to provide a more standardized learning experience and role specific patient interaction for the students.
- Challenges faced in arranging a practicum experience
- Lack of opportunity to apply new learning
- Faculty report of inconsistent quality of student work related to those observation-only clinical hours.
- The faculty felt compelled to explore less traditional approaches to providing to the students the opportunity for patient assessment, exploration of the community based nursing role and development of a plan of care.
- The choice to move in the direction of using a virtual experience was based on current literature and in-depth discussion with product providers.
- A review of the Essentials for Baccalaureate Nursing (AACN, 2008) informed the review of current student learning objectives and writing of new ones to align with using a virtual community.

**Theoretical Framework**

### Experiential Learning Theory

The Experiential Learning Theory developed by David Kolb (1984) and Constructivist Learning Theory developed by Jerome Bruner (1966) strongly supports the way in which students learn in traditional nursing curriculum; determining a plan of care for a patient in an environment that is readily available to the learner, and where they can draw upon present knowledge to generate new knowledge and understand new concepts.


**Visual Representation**

The entries made by the students for the Likert type scale, dichotomous and narrative items were compiled into a report for faculty review. A discussion group of teaching faculty yielded suggestions for changes to assignment, placement of assignments within the course and enhancement of rubrics. The responses provided by the students resulted in clarification of instructions for how to access the virtual community, assignment direction and more detail added in the assignment worksheets/tables. The virtual community will be used in an ongoing manner with revisions as indicated by student and faculty feedback.