

Faculty Development: Using Nursing Journals as Teaching Tools

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Introduction

Most nursing faculty would agree that good reading habits are an essential prerequisite for high-quality nursing practice. Anecdotally, nursing faculty report that they believe many of their students do not read prior to class. Nevertheless, the promotion of reading habits should be an integral part of nursing education. At the most basic level read-

ing habits should be regular and discerning. Regular refers to reading minimally once per week. Discerning means an analytical, critical, evaluative, and reflective approach to reading (Sheehan, 1994). The question therefore posed is how do nursing faculty promote regular and discerning reading prior to class, clinical, or for the mere purpose of learning? Before we can investigate how to promote good reading habits, it is important to examine current practice.

The Problem

Typically, students are encouraged to read journal articles as an adjunct to assigned textbook readings. Sometimes students may perceive that textbook reading assignments are more important than nursing journal assignments. Completing assigned journal readings may also be complicated by the fact that some nursing faculty may assign extensive or possibly even exorbitant pages of text readings. For instance, Whaley and Wong's 6th edition *Nursing Care of Infants and Children* is 2001 pages of text, and this is a daunting amount of reading for faculty to assign or students in pediatrics to read in one semester. Some faculty may also perceive that the amount of assigned textbook readings are extensive and may therefore only assign journal readings as "recommended reading." However, making a journal article a "recommended reading" assignment rather than a "required reading" assignment is certainly the death knell to the likelihood that students will take the time to procure the journal article and read it.

Despite these problems associated with assigning nursing journal articles and getting students to read them, it remains evident that nursing journal articles tend to be more current than textbooks given present publishing practices.

Textbooks, which are usually revised every 4-5 years, can be rapidly outdated by new research or technology. With globalization and the rapid pace of knowledge development in most disciplines (including nursing), it is increasingly difficult to stay current. Journal reading however remains one way to stay abreast of new developments in the field of nursing. Furthermore, for practicing RN/BSN students, they are often preferable to textbooks. Unfortunately, due to copyright laws, nursing faculty are usually prohibited from providing a journal article to each member of a class. Therefore, the reading of nursing journals often requires the student to locate and read journal articles independently. Such a solitary activity often discourages students who have not traditionally engaged in many independent learning experiences. Critical thinking and the pursuit of nursing knowledge using reflective and even solitary pedagogies must be encouraged. These kind of activities need to be incorporated into the learning environment where they can be fostered and supported, and the critical reading of nursing journals is just one of many techniques and strategies that can be used.

Strategies to promote the use of journal articles need to be purposeful and consistent in the learning environment. These include the establishment of a journal club, the use of clinical logs, mini post-conference clinical presentations, the citation of current nursing and non-nursing literature in class, the incorporation of journal articles into classroom activities, and the use of computer retrieved nursing journal articles from the Internet.

Journal Clubs

Journal reading can be an enjoyable, productive, ongoing experience if nurtured during the educational process. The content of the journal article must be meaningful to the student and related to lecture content and clinical experience. Journal clubs can either be student led or facilitated by a faculty advisor. The goals of journal clubs are to: 1) keep abreast of current literature; 2) improve the student's ability to critically evaluate the literature; 3) promote life-long learning; and 4) stimulate debate on current practice issues.

A faculty advisor could provide a list of journals that are appropriate for course content and the level of the student. Journal lists can change as students progress throughout their course of study. The appropriate time frame and guidelines for the discussion should also be provided. An example of a discussion agenda at a journal club meeting would include 1) the problem to be investigated; 2) review of literature; 3) method; 4) analysis of research results; 5) evaluation of the credibility of the study; 6) discussion of the study's findings and their applicability to the clinical setting; 7) analysis of the ability to replicate the study; and 8) ideas for future research (Nolf, 1995). Other agendas may consist of an in-

depth discussion of relevant clinical topics that includes physiology, symptomatology, treatment, comparison with similar conditions, etc. For example, a faculty-led journal club could discuss how metabolic acidosis differs from respiratory acidosis. Students could bring a journal article that relates to Arterial Blood Gas Interpretation and students could hypothetically devise ABG slips indicating each diagnosis. A student-led journal club could be facilitated by an Honors or above average student, and the group leader could e-mail the journal club members and announce that everyone should bring an article on women and heart disease to the next club meeting for discussion. Journal clubs should encourage questioning among participants and improve students' presentation skills. Active questioning helps stimulate learning and critical thinking and the use of critique of nursing journal articles can serve as a platform to accomplish this. Moreover, active questioning encourages reflection. In a journal club, reflection can be externalized and subjected to the scrutiny of the group who may also act as validating agents. In this way, everyone benefits from the discussion (Sheehan, 1994). This is the power of group learning.

Clinical Logs

Clinical Logs can also be a value-added learning tool. Students can be asked to compare and contrast current clinical practice or conditions with the literature or discuss the evolution of a practice trend. This exercise assists the student in gaining knowledge and appreciation for the advancement of nursing practice based on current research. Asking a student who is currently doing an oncology/hematology rotation to discuss the evolution of care of the neutropenic patient in the last ten years, citing relevant research in a Clinical Log is an illustration of this learning activity. It is desirable that Clinical Logs be graded, but not scrutinized. It is difficult to expect students to produce a high quality product if faculty do not value the product enough to assign a comparable grade. Even assigning a work product a Pass/Fail grade seems to devalue the work.

Mini Post-conference Clinical Presentations

One clinical pedagogical technique is to use part of post-conference for mini clinical presentations by students in the clinical group. Mini-clinical presentations can be assigned based on the clinical patients the students are caring for. Students are informed they must cite current relevant nursing research from nursing journals in their presentations and to be concise. This technique has been used for years by one of the co-authors of this article. For example, one Fundamentals student was learning how to operate a tympanic thermometer and wondered how reliable it was. The student was then asked to present a mini-clinical presentation the following week in post-conference (an absolute max of 10 minutes) on what the nursing literature says about the reliability of different forms of temperature equipment. It is truly amazing to experience what students produce in these mini presentations. Students make up posters, bring in equipment, and sometimes even Fundamentals students produce incredible presentations that could easily be considered appropriate for presentation to practicing RNs. This assignment also forces students to go beyond their textbooks and see what nursing journals are saying about the latest technologies that interface with nursing.

Citation of Literature

It is important to be a role model and cite research and its impact on practice on a consistent basis. Students will get the message concerning the significance of evidenced-based clinical practice when faculty demonstrates the value of research in the classroom and clinical environment on a regular basis. For example, when discussing how nursing students can provide therapeutic interventions to promote sleep, students can not only discuss the relevant literature that relates to the Stages of Sleep, but also discuss the Dreher Model of Sleep Phases (Dreher, 1996). The Dreher Model of Sleep Phases is a nursing model of sleep that has more clinical utility than the Stages of Sleep.

The Incorporation of Journal Reading into Classroom Activities

Having students debate a method of care is another way to incorporate journal reading into classroom activities. For example, the students could debate the topic: "Therapeutic Touch is a Fraud." Each debate team prepares their case, pro or con, and cites studies during the formal debate to support their argument. Debating the editorial section in a nursing journal or newspaper also increases the student's awareness of current health care issues. This exercise is highly enjoyable and yet teaches the student how to prepare a sound argument and articulate their thoughts quickly. In other words, using debate relying on arguments supported by information cited in nursing journals really can help students "think on their feet."

Faculty can also assign brief articles in class for immediate group reading and discussion. Many journals have sections of articles that are short and can be read, digested, and analyzed in a short period of time. Each group can then be responsible for critique of a particular section of the article. For example, Group A might be responsible for critiquing the Methods section and Group B might be responsible for discussing the limitations of the article.

The Use of Computer Retrieved Nursing Journal Articles from the Internet

Finally, many nursing students have grown up using the Internet and are adept at using the World Wide Web to gather information. While information retrieval is important, many students do not possess the ability to intelligently discriminate research-based information from propaganda. Students need to learn how to evaluate the credibility of electronic sources and need to learn how to discern what information is supported by the literature and what is not.

In the past, students had to go to a library to access nursing journals. Now, students with home computers can access electronic journals available in their university and college libraries from home. However, many libraries only have a limited number of journals that are available electronically. It is imperative that nursing faculty encourage librarians each year to add new nursing journal titles to their annual purchases of electronic media.

Another great way to assist students with information retrieval and help them keep current with the latest nursing research is to subscribe to MEDSCAPE's Nurses MedPulse® at Error! Bookmark not defined. By subscribing, the nursing student will receive a weekly list of journal articles that describe the latest findings and trends in nursing and health disciplines related to nursing. An abstract of the article is pro-

vided and the student can easily download the article for further reading if desired. This is a great resource that is convenient and interesting.

Summary

Nursing faculty continue to be aware of the multiple challenges they and their students face in today's environment, given the recent knowledge explosion in health care within the last decade. It is impossible to teach or learn everything. Therefore, fostering good reading habits becomes even more critical. Also, it is imperative that faculty teach students how to access and manage information to ensure that their nursing practice is based on up-to-date knowledge. Thus, nursing practice should be based on evidence and research rather than ritual. In summary, Hirsh (1992) defined life-long learning as learning that continues throughout people's lives rather than a process that ends once full-time education is complete. Nurse educators who cultivate a learning environment where members feel empowered to learn and impact the profession can promote life-long learning. Go forth and create a climate where life-long learning becomes the norm.

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Nashville to Host NSNA Annual Convention

The 49th Annual Convention of the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) will take place in Nashville, Tennessee, at Opryland, April 4-8, 2001. The convention theme, "NSNA: Tuning In To Professionalism," is inspired by Nashville's rich music heritage. The convention program includes a variety of cutting-edge topics at both plenary and focus sessions, workshops, as well as the annual meeting of the House of Delegates. An expected 200 exhibits, a highly informative career development/counseling center, and many other special events will attract over 2,500 undergraduate nursing students from across the nation to Nashville.

The Opening Ceremony Keynote, Robert V. Piemonte, EdD, RN, CAE, FAAN, sets the stage for the full spectrum of convention activities. Dr. Piemonte retired in 1996 as executive director of NSNA. He has held positions in nursing organizations on the local, state, and national levels and is currently president-elect of the New York State Nurses Association. Dr. Piemonte is a retired U.S. Army Colonel and is the recipient of numerous military and civilian awards. He is joined on the platform by nursing dignitaries from throughout the U.S. and the NSNA Board of Directors. The keynote speaker is sponsored by Nurses Service OrganizationSM (NSO), Hatboro, PA.

Three plenary sessions addressing relevant issues facing nursing students and the nursing profession feature panels of renowned speakers. Thursday, April 5, 2001: "International Nursing: Opportunities and Challenges." Moderator: Cheryl Peterson, Senior Policy Fellow, International Affairs, American Nurses Association. Sponsor: American Nurses Association, Washington, D.C. Friday, April 6, 2001: "What is Nursing's Future? How Do We Begin to Create It?" Speaker: Colleen Conway-Welch, PhD, RN, CNM, FAAN, FACNM, Professor and Dean, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing, Nashville, TN. Sponsor: National League for Nursing (NLN), New York, NY. Saturday, April 7, 2001: "Moving Forward With Ease." Speaker: Shelia Allen, BSN, RN, CNOR, CRNFA, President-Elect, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses. Sponsor: Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN), Denver, CO.

The NSNA and MCP Hahnemann University will offer 8 hours of selected topics frequently questioned on the NCLEX-Registered Nurse exam. The NSNA NCLEX Excel!TM Mini Review Course covers ECGs; pharmacology and perioperative care. Test-taking skills, a mock NCLEX exam, and review of answers make this review a highly effective tool to boost test scores.

A unique one day seminar that explores how to motivate, guide, and encourage students and peers to excel in the nursing profession. Speaker/Facilitator: Connie Vance, EdD, RN, FAAN, co-author, *The Mentor Connection in Nursing*, Springer Publishing Co., 1998. Sponsor: Nursing Spectrum, Falls Church, VA.

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More than 200 representatives from hospitals, agencies, schools of nursing, publishers, review course providers, fundraising companies, and others will be available in the Exhibit Hall to answer career questions or to assist with the products and services they offer. Attendees can speak with prospective employers, find out about the latest information on products, and take advantage of many convention discounts offered by exhibitors.

NSNA honors its special contest winners and the Foundation of the National Student Nurses' Association (FNSNA) pays tribute to scholarship sponsors and winners at the annual Awards Ceremony on Thursday, April 5. Presentation of the prestigious U.S. Army Nurse Corps Spirit of Nursing Award is also made to an outstanding nursing student leader. The Awards Ceremony is followed by a gala reception, sponsored by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Army Nurse Corps. All registrants are invited to attend.

On Wednesday night, April 4, the First Night Party is sponsored by Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, publishers of *Nursing 2001* and *American Journal of Nursing*, Philadelphia, PA, Nurses Service Organization, Hatboro, PA and NursingCenter.com/Nurse 2001, New York, NY. This fun-filled event provides registrants an opportunity to network and meet new friends.

One of the most enjoyable convention events is the Music City Auction, which raises funds for the FNSNA's Mary Ann Tuft Scholarship Fund. Held on Friday, April 6, in the Exhibit Hall, it's a chance to donate and bid on items ranging from valuable nursing textbooks to gift baskets, posters, and more. The auction is underwritten by Student Resources, providers of the NSNA Health and Accident Insurance Plan and student loan program.

Focus sessions on clinical and issue related topics will be offered. General topics and sponsors are: Perioperative Nursing, Sponsor: Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, Denver, CO. Orthopaedic Nursing, Sponsor: National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses, Pitman, NJ. Nurse Anesthesia, Sponsor: American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Park Ridge, IL. Critical Care Nursing, Sponsor: American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, Aliso Viejo, CA. Organ Donation - It Is All About Life, Sponsor: Tennessee Donor Services, Nashville, TN. Nursing and Research, Sponsor: Sigma Theta Tau, Indianapolis, IN. Career Mobility, Sponsor: KAPLAN Educational Centers, New York, NY. Oncology Nursing, Sponsor: Oncology Nursing Society, Pittsburgh, PA.. Women's Health, Sponsor: Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, Washington, DC. Emergency Nursing, Sponsor: Emergency Nurses Association, Park Ridge, IL. Reliable Health Care and Consumer Information, Sponsor: National Library of Medicine, Baltimore, MD. Spiritual Care, Sponsor: Nurses Christian Fellowship, Downers Grove, IL. Your Life After NSNA: A Look At The Professional Association, Sponsor: National Student Nurses' Association, New York, NY. Media, Nursing, and Health Care, Sponsor: American Journal of Nursing, New York, NY. Investigating Dangers at Work and in the Community, Sponsor: Association of Occupational & Environmental Clinics, Washington, DC. Other sponsoring organizations include: NSO: Affinity Insurance Services - official provider of NSNA's professional liability insurance, Hatboro, PA, American Nurses Association, Washington, DC, and National League for Nursing, New York, NY.