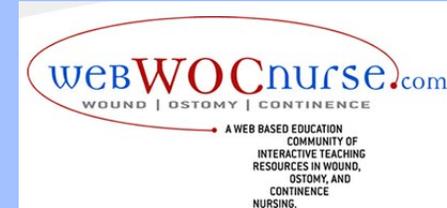


Creating an Online Educational Community for Wound, Ostomy, Contingence Nursing Students: A Case Study

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PURPOSE

This case study describes methodologies used in the online webWOC Nursing education Program which has been accredited by the Wound, Ostomy, Contingence Nurses Society (WOCN) for over 2 years. The Program educates nurses to become Wound, Ostomy, Contingence Nurses. It also discusses advantages of online learning and student responses to this educational experience.

Background

A formal certificate education process for WOC (ET) Nursing has been a hallmark of the specialty for over 30 years. There currently exist 6 Full Scope of Practice Programs in the United States with the goal of educating students to become WOC nurses. Such programs are likely offered in metropolitan cities and most require relocating for the 4-9 week residency.

Because of the requirement for this lengthy residency, distance education programs have emerged and, since the 1990's offered students the option to stay at home and complete self-paced Programs. Correspondence programs were the primary means of delivering this distance education. While these programs met an important need, they lacked the interaction, timely feedback and student cohort that are considered essential to effective educational experiences. Students studied in isolation, without formal progressions for completion.

It is not possible to fully understand the benefits and drawbacks of this educational approach since there are no published papers from any WOC Nursing Education Program that report outcomes of education. It is a goal of the webWOC Nursing Education Program to change that tradition and this poster represents the 4th report of processes and results from this Program.

Technology needs of the Online Learner

"The key to successful learning online is to make technology work on behalf of the student."

- The webWOC Nursing Education Program has been designed to run on computers students already have.
- High speed internet connections and special software are NOT required to participate in the Program.
- Instructional materials utilized in the Program are in compliance with instructional design standards for online learning.

Methods

Online Education: Is it Effective?

While the Internet has been utilized in distance learning for over 20 years, it has only been used in WOC Nursing for 2 years. In 1995, over 700,000 students in the United States were participating in distance learning on the Internet. In 2000, almost 10% of graduate students were learning via the Internet.

A meta-compilation of 355 studies and reports (Russell, 1999) that compare the results of face to face learning versus online learning concluded that there were:

"No significant difference" in student performance between these educational delivery methods."

In April, 2003, the webWOC Nursing Education Program reported pass rates on the national certification exam for WOC Nursing as:

"Equal to or above the national average."

Methods

Creating Online Education Communities: Online Teaching Tools

Teaching online is not the same as teaching face to face. Educators who teach online require a different set of skills and attention to student detail. (Sheinberg, 2002)

Courseware: Standardized course delivery systems are now in use in the United States. The student simply logs onto the Internet and proceeds to their courses.

Asynchronous Discussions: Learning through interactions that are not in real time. Interaction between instructors and students occurs on student and faculty member's schedule. Examples include: courses on CD-ROM, Q&A, mentoring, online discussion groups, postings to the bulletin board and email.

Live Seminars: Real-time discussions the faculty holds with the student cohort; content and information is shared via text-based communication, a process familiar to many as "Chat"

Additional Online Teaching Tools

Simulations: Through case studies students simulate appropriate assessments, interventions and evaluations.

Email: The central method of communicating within the Program; often assignments are submitted via email.

Immersion: Live experience on campus with lectures, simulations, discussion and networking.

Feedback: The faculty use email and phone calling to provide critiques and recommendations for improvement to students concerning bulletin board discussions, assignments, seminar participation and exam results.

Orientation: A formal online and live seminar is conducted with students to introduce them to the online learning environment and expectations and to begin to build community.

Group Work: Students are divided into small groups during live seminars to work in specific case studies.

Games: Interactive online games are available to students that are designed as drills and reinforcement exercises.



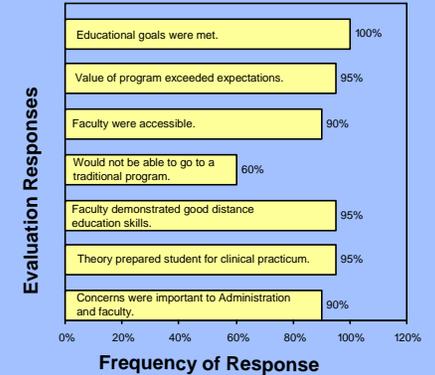
At home: but always in COMMUNITY

This student attends class one evening a week, after work.

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Level I Evaluation: Program Evaluation (N=20)



Evaluation Responses

Frequency of Response

Anecdotal Comments from Graduates

of the webWOC Nursing Education Program

"The knowledgeable faculty and their personalities are a strength of the program in that they were very supportive and tried to make sure that we all understood everything. They didn't give up on us!"

"It was great to be able to stay at home, use the Internet to do research, having the accessibility to our module and not having to wait for them in the mail."

"Can go to class anywhere...if out of town, at the hospital or home!"

"The biggest advantage of learning online for me was I got to stay home – it was hard on my family, but not nearly like it would have been if I was completely gone for several weeks."

"I was able to attend class in my pajamas and not leave the house!"

"Convenience was wonderful!"

"It was great to turn in homework via email!"