

Working across Professional Boundaries

Adele Atkinson and Kath Start

St George's Hospital Medical School and Kingston University

aatkinso@hscs.sghms.ac.uk

Keywords

Health, interprofessional, infrastructure, boundaries, and practicalities

Summary

As an individual matures, their self-concept matures from dependence to self-direction (Knowles, 1990). Strategies to foster self-directedness should aim to progressively decrease dependence on the educator, foster decision making and facilitate the application of theory to practice (Mezirow, 1981; Knowles, 1990). Problem based learning is one such strategy. It is student-centred and attempts to replicate issues that students see in practice (Amos and White, 1998).

A storyboard was developed using a problem-based learning approach with the patient at the centre. It presents two patients and describes their social and medical histories, along with their dietary habits, psychological issues, and events leading up to their current condition (including pictures of the wound). The theoretical content of the module and the knowledge & skills needed to manage the patients lead from this. This includes structure and function of the skin, physiology of wound healing, factors affecting wound healing, wound dressings, body image and accountability. Theory is linked back to the patient in a series of questions allowing students to apply knowledge. Wound management is a visual subject, so images were used to aid understanding.

The storyboard was translated into web format by courseware designers and launched into the Blackboard learning management system.

E-learning enables student interaction in the learning process, thus ensuring that they are not passive learners. It gives meaning to student-based learning, progressively decreases dependence on the lecturer and helps students acquire the intrinsic motivation required for lifelong learning (Carlton et al, 1998). As a revision tool, presentations and notes are more accurate than student notes. All relevant material for sessions, handouts, references, further reading can be on the e-learning system.

The general principles of wound management module was chosen for this approach because of its wide application wound management is an issue for the whole multi-professional team, including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and care assistants. Although developed from a course for qualified nurses, this module can be used for pre-registration nursing students, medical students and physiotherapy students. Certain elements will also be useful to radiography students. It can also be adapted for care assistants who perform simple dressings. The use of web-design and the problem-based-learning format lend themselves to healthcare education and training and will be developed further for other modules and courses.

Both authors have worked across professional groups (interprofessional working) and across two universities (a traditional medical school SGHMS - and a large multi-provision university - KU). The Faculty (FHSCS) provides education for the NHS for nurses, physiotherapists and radiographers and also runs courses in social work. Interprofessional courses are run within the two host institutions.

SGHMS has used web-design for its Graduate Entry Programme (GEP) training for medical students. The FHSS IT project links with both the GEP department and KU to enhance the development of networked learning within the FHSS.

Because the FHSS lies within two institutions this created some initial difficulties. Our approach allowed the FHSS to design and develop a strategy to support an e-learning infrastructure within the e-learning strategies of both institutions. Working relationships with the GEP department of SGHMS were developed during the planning and implementation stages and with KU's Blackboard management project.

References

Amos, E. White, M (1998) Problem-based learning. Nurse Educator, 23 (2), 11-14

Carlton, K. Ryan, M. Siktberg, L. (1998) Designing courses for the internet. Nurse Educator, 23 (3), 45-50

Knowles, M (1990) The adult learner as a neglected species. (4th ed.) Gulf: Houston

Mezirow,, J. (1981) A critical theory of adult learning and education. Adult education, 32 (1)