

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Learning Nursing Skills Through Empathy Training

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

To help nursing students understand what their geriatric patients are experiencing, an instructor uses geriatric empathy training kits, a set of tools that simulate normal and abnormal signs of aging. Each kit includes a body vest and ankle or wrist weights students wear to simulate decreased muscle mass, a neck brace to simulate neck stiffness, knee and elbow braces to simulate joint stiffness, a device to simulate arthritis, glasses to simulate vision problems, and headphones to simulate hearing problems. There are usually 12 students in the course. During dedicated lab time, six students volunteer to wear the devices, and the other six conduct clinical assessments and interviews with their “patients.” The clinical assessments explore what prompted the patient to seek medical help and entail a series of tests to examine any physical or developmental changes the patient may have experienced. The additional questions and tests aim to assess other issues unrelated to the hospital visit and help the nurse determine if the patient is experiencing additional problems such as confusion or loss of appetite. The students in the nurse role also ask about medication and inquire about daily living activities. These assessments usually take 25 to 30 minutes. The students in the patient role not only experience challenges like not being able to hear the questions asked, but they are also assigned medical histories and diagnoses to guide their answers. Because lab time is limited, students do not switch places. Instead, students discuss their experiences with each other and try to learn from one another. At the end of the lab session, students engage in a class discussion about their experiences and explore what they learned from each other; each student is required to participate.

Notes From the Instructor About This Innovative Teaching Practice:

The kits are obtained from a company called Realityworks.