

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Combining Kinesthetic Learning With Class Discussion

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

For this innovative teaching practice, the instructor engages nursing students through kinesthetic learning activities to improve clinical problem solving, communication skills, and critical thinking skills that will help them succeed in their future careers. The instructor notes that these practices can be used during lecture to help increase student engagement and to improve the use of classroom-acquired knowledge. The goals of these learning activities are to help decrease the well-known classroom-clinical gap by enhancing engagement while providing deeper understanding of brain profusions and the function of arteries.

For this first activity, the instructor hands out copies of images of the brain and provides students with small packages of crayons. While students color the different sections of the brain, the class discusses what the different brain parts do, how they function within the body, and if they function differently in each of the brain hemispheres. As students discuss and review the parts and functions of different parts of the brain, the instructor poses more advanced discussion questions. An example of a more advanced question would be the following: “If a person has a brain attack or stroke, what symptoms would you see and how can you identify them?” The activity stimulates practical application of the material as well as critical thinking about how a nurse would need to handle brain injuries or attacks. This activity can be used to review any organ or body part.

For the second activity, the instructor uses playdough to help students study arteries. For the activity, students use pencils, a one-inch diameter ball of red playdough, and a smaller ball of white playdough about the diameter of a pencil. Students mold the red playdough around a pencil and then remove it from the pencil; this represents the artery and illustrates how it can stretch depending on blood pressure. The instructor then asks students to place the white playdough inside the red playdough to represent a clot, which blocks the artery. To represent an aneurysm, the students first push the clot out with the pencil and then take the sharpened end of the pencil and partially push it through the red playdough to create a small bubble. The instructor asks the students to then “pop” the bubble to illustrate blood leaking in the brain.

During the activity, the instructor facilitates a discussion of what happens during an aneurysm, what the symptoms are, what signs to look for, and possible outcomes. The activity provides students with a visualization of what is occurring in the arteries as well as an opportunity to discuss the challenges that can occur with arteries, blood flow, and blood pressure.