

### Noelle Marie Upton: Using Social Media to Enhance Nursing Education

Nursing education has become increasingly complex, and burgeoning curricula reflect the added learning needs of nursing students. Students are more technologically advanced than even as little as 5 years ago and look to this technology to aid in their learning. Social media is another technological innovation that has not yet been widely used and embraced by faculty. Facebook® is now the second most visited Web site in the world, second only to Google™ (Lukes, 2010). The growing popularity of social media offers several pedagogical opportunities for faculty to interact with students in a new learning environment.

An opportunity to engage students using social media was initiated with the development of a Facebook page using the nursing school's simulators as a virtual family. The page was named for the obstetrics–gynecology simulator, Noelle®. Noelle's family included her husband Steve (SimMan®) and 3-year-old son Hunter (child Hal®). Noelle was created to simulate a family with realistic medical problems, encompassing pediatric illness, obstetrical and women's health, and medical–surgical illness, while threading pharmacology throughout. Current health professionals were then asked to “friend” Noelle on Facebook to serve as a resource for the students.

At the beginning of the project, Noelle had 15 health professional friends, including pediatric nurses, respiratory therapists, obstetrical nurses, physicians, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and trauma nurses. Noelle was then introduced to junior-level nursing students and within 2 hours had more than 30 friend requests.

Noelle is not set up to be a teacher, but rather a layperson with medical questions. This allows for discussion of the subject matter as the students would with family members and patients. The goal of the project was to have Noelle post status updates on Facebook about what is going on in her life and ask for advice from her friends, essentially using a virtual case study. As the nursing students replied, they used the knowledge they had gained in various lecture courses or drew upon knowledge from previous courses. The students had to ask further health history questions and have discussions with other students to answer Noelle's questions, and they had to put their answers in layperson's terms for her to understand. The health professionals then interjected with responses based on what they had seen in their clinical practices and offered the students advice. The students may also ask Noelle questions by writing on her Facebook wall, and she can choose to either respond to the question or redirect it to other students or professionals for discussion and answers.

Along with status updates and questions, Noelle has also indicated “Likes”

for a variety of health-related Web pages and organizations, such as breast cancer awareness and NCLEX® review sites. This has provided links to Web sites that students may access quickly for relevant information. Health-related YouTube videos have also been linked to the page.

This project is still early in its inception but is showing promising results as the students become more comfortable with their postings. Student feedback has been favorable; many students have commented that the realistic scenarios presented on the Facebook page are making them think about what they have learned in a more practical way. Some students, seeming to have forgotten that Noelle is a simulator, posted empathetic responses, encouraging her to contact them if she needed anything. This project will be ongoing for as long as the interest remains. The hope is that students will continue to remain a “friend” after graduation and then be able to respond to future students as nursing professionals.

#### Reference

Lukes, C. (2010). Social media. *AAOHN Journal*, 58, 415-417.

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The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.  
doi:10.3928/01484834-20120620-02