Class Dress Analogy: A Fun and Easy Approach to Active Learning

First-year nursing students are introduced to many new concepts and basic terms in a fundamentals of nursing course. These terms and concepts are used in every clinical setting and must be mastered to provide safe and effective patient care. Directing students to discuss and apply these new terms and concepts to an analogy that is added to an engaging, interactive lecture can encourage active learning and assist students to analyze, understand, and retain some of this new information (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Heick, 2016). By using the popular topic of clothing as the basis on which to form an analogy about urinary elimination, nursing students willingly and thoughtfully participated in a class discussion and actively learned some of the professional terminology used to describe characteristics of normal and abnormal urinary elimination.

Method

Approximately 10 days before the scheduled lecture on urinary elimination, entry-level nursing students were asked to wear yellow clothing or to bring a yellow accessory to the lecture. Students were instructed that the item selected would clearly be easily seen by their peers during the lecture. No further details about the upcoming lecture were provided. This early direction gave students who did not own a yellow item the opportunity to borrow or purchase an item for class. Concurrently, the early instruction ignited curiosity in the upcoming lecture.

On the assigned day, a lecture that was rich with color photos and containers of simulated urine was presented to the class. The students then were asked to draw an analogy between the amount of yellow they were wearing and the normal volume of urinary output. The terms *anuria*, *oliguria*, and *polyuria* were announced individually, and students were asked to stand if they believed the stated term applied to the quantity of yellow clothing or accessories they were wearing. Students who were seated were asked to decide whether they agreed with the standing students’ conclusions.

The class extended the analogy when students compared the color of what they wore to the normal color of urine. Students subsequently were asked to stand if they believed the color of their clothing reflected an abnormal color of urine. Discussion ensued as students related their clothing or accessory color, yellow or otherwise, to potential underlying causes of that color such as dehydration, hematuria, medication, or the presence of liver or kidney disease.

Results

In an unsolicited e-mail, one student stated that “All the interaction was super helpful for all of us.” In responding to a cross-sectional, open-ended questionnaire, students frequently described this activity as “fun.” They also said it was helpful for visual learners, increased understanding of vocabulary and terminology, and aided in recalling the information in the clinical area. Students who had taken the class in previous years also remembered the lecture and content, and they suggested that this technique be used for other lecture topics.

Conclusion

Discussion is a proven active learning technique to assist students in retaining and applying knowledge. Because of the importance of clothing to college students, a clothing analogy can easily be used to ignite discussion even if that discussion is about urinary elimination terminology. Whether face-to-face in a traditional classroom or with a self-portrait photograph in an online course, educators will find the class dress analogy is an easy and effective approach to active learning, and students will find the discussion involving the analogy a helpful and fun one.

References


Ramona C. Anest, MSN, RNC-TNP; CNE, CHSE ranest@bju.edu

Bob Jones University

The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise. doi:10.3928/01484834-20190103-13