



Book Reviews

Addressing the Needs of People: Best Practices in Community-Oriented Health Professions Education

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Network Publications, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2001)

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[Note. For a paper deriving from this book, see page x, this issue]

Beginning with the premise that efforts to educate good doctors require innovative approaches, institutional commitment and a basic sense of social responsibility, the editors of this book have compiled nine case studies of health professions education programs around the world that are identified as exemplary community-oriented programs. The editors define community-oriented programs as those which are responsive to the local community and the environment in which graduates will practice, and which train students in both hospital and non-hospital settings. Six contributing authors, using anthropological field research methodology including participant observation and in-depth interviews, studied nine different institutions. Research questions investigating institutional characteristics, curricula, admissions practices, evaluation systems, research, service, community involvement, faculty development, postgraduate programs and the school's relationship with government entities were explored at each institution and the findings are presented as chapters in the book.

Though of general interest to health professions educators, the book is of particular interest to those involved in the developing role of academic institutions in response to world health issues. From this perspective, the book is a useful resource as a snapshot of medical education in Chile, Cuba, Egypt, India, the Philippines, Sudan, Sweden, South Africa, and the United States. Though much of the information is place specific to a particular institution, there are several examples of policies or practices that could be applied in a broader context. For example, the chapter describing the University of Transkei includes a useful set of student competencies, as well as a set of institutional goals, which provide a framework for education in the context of community-identified needs. In the chapters reviewing the Cuban System of Medical Education and Linköping University in Sweden, the curricular structure is summarized in terms of integrated and development phases of study that support community-oriented programs.

Some common themes emerged among clusters of institutions involved in the study. For example, several of the institutions incorporate a problem-based learning model of education. Recruitment of students interested in a community-oriented program was not clear or standardized, but active in informal and subtle ways. There was little direct involvement of the surrounding community in decision-making or operations, but significant, indirect, community involvement

through public health initiatives and linkages with local governmental structures was apparent.

The detailed descriptions of the nine programs are a real strength of this work which, along with other publications produced in conjunction with *The Network: Community Partnerships for Health through Innovative Education, Service and Research*, establish a foundation from which further analysis can be developed. The editors provide a summary of the findings from the various institutions; however, a more comprehensive analysis would have been useful. Based on the data collected, some evaluative observations about the extent to which the institutions in the study demonstrated the desired characteristics of community-oriented programs could have been made. Additionally, some specific guidelines for developing community-oriented programs would be useful for the ongoing collective work of preparing good doctors.

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Transforming Nursing Education Through Problem-Based Learning

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Problem-based learning (PBL) is rapidly advancing as an innovative and effective teaching strategy in nursing education. Although well established in the medical school community, PBL has recently gained popularity in nursing, as educators recognize the importance of involving students in the process of active learning. *Transforming Nursing Education Through Problem-Based Learning* provides a comprehensive resource for both faculty who are interested in incorporating PBL into their current curriculum, and schools of nursing who are already using PBL but desire to expand the focus into distance and web-based education.

The authors, faculty members from the School of Nursing at McMaster University, are known experts in the subject matter, as PBL has been implemented throughout McMaster's entire nursing curriculum since the mid 1970s. In this book, the authors have done a wonderful job of compiling a comprehensive guide that offers a thorough description of the PBL process, as well as including specific strategies, evaluation techniques, and resources needed for implementing PBL into a nursing program.

The book consists of 15 chapters, all of which are packed with information relevant to nursing education. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork by offering a brief description of the changes occurring in health care in the 21st century and why nursing education must expand its focus to meet the challenges of the current

health care system. Chapter 2 provides a general overview of PBL in action and includes sample cases for learning. The next four chapters discuss various issues inherent in PBL including developing self-directed learning, facilitating small group learning and information management skills, and fostering reflective practice through the use of journals and portfolios.

The focus of Chapters 7–11 is on the faculty role in PBL, ranging from “getting started” through “methods of evaluation”. The authors present specific strategies and describe the resources necessary for implementing PBL effectively. Chapters 12–14 reflect creative innovations in nursing education, including the use of standardized patients as an educational resource and the use of PBL in graduate programs and distance education, which includes web-based courses. The book concludes with a discussion of PBL as an effective methodology to assist students in obtaining the outcomes needed to practice professional nursing in today’s changing health care environment. Implications for nursing administrators, faculty, and students are discussed.

Although primarily written for faculty use, students unfamiliar with the PBL format might utilize this book as a resource when beginning PBL instruction. The inclusion of strategies for using PBL in distance education and web-based programs reflects current and future trends in higher education. The author not only discusses the use of PBL in nursing education, she also presents some very innovative instructional methods not generally used in nursing, particularly the use of standardized patients as a learning resource.

PBL is an effective educational method that can be used to prepare future nurses with the knowledge and skills they will need for professional practice in a changing health care environment. This book provides both a theoretical and practical approach to the understanding and implementation of new methods for delivering nursing education in the 21st century.

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