Editorial

Fostering new pedagogies for the new age: The use of social media in nursing education

In a time of global challenges in health care services, increasing consumer involvement in health care decisions, and the increasing new population of what is now referred to as "generation next" or "mellineal" or "wired generation," new communication technologies are continuously emerging for health promotion activities providing public health outreach to communities as well as in health professional education. Universities and schools of nursing are now slowly recognizing new methods of teaching and learning to equip students with skills and knowledge to engage with the global community. However, it has been reported that professional education, in general, has not kept up with these challenges because of fragmented, outdated and static curricula that produce ill-equipped graduates (1). It was suggested that a re-examination and re-design of professional education is necessary not only because health professional as health providers could now link patients to information and knowledge through the use of technology but also as professional educators, we have a responsibility to ensure professional competencies in our "generation next" students (2).

As technological advances continue to expand connectivity and communication, electronic media use including email, instant messaging, cellular phone communication, social networking sites, video, and online lectures are now becoming part of everyday life. Modern technologies are also transforming learning environments to support active learning by creating a learning space independent of time or place. Today's learners have also progressively embraced technology as a learning tool, and some lectures are now podcast and textbooks are now E-books. The pedagogical use of social networking technology in education is growing interest to academics as a potential teaching and learning tool.

It was suggested that social networking between academics and students enhanced interaction and collaboration, information and resource sharing and developing skills in critical reflection (3).

Social media has been defined as a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online (4). It is a two-way conversation rather than a one-way broadcast like traditional media. It is more than an emerging technology or cultural trend. It is a method of communication that is changing the way individuals and organizations throughout the world transmit and receive information. Examples of social media applications include Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Skype, Wiki, Blog, and many more will emerge as new social networking sites are developed. As technology rapidly changes so is the pedagogy with nursing education. Nursing accreditation bodies are encouraging nursing programs to incorporate nursing informatics and technology competence to prepare nursing students to practice in technology-enabled clinical environments. Therefore, the use of social media in nursing education could be one-way of initiating students to actively participate in discussions and at the same time expand their technological abilities. The primary argument for adopting social media in teaching is that social media applications provide multiple formats, directions, channels of communication that can improve educational outcomes (5). Studies found that the voluntary, self-directed, and student-centered nature of learning anytime and place could motivate students to engage further in activities and foster subsequent deep learning and thus improve student satisfaction (6, 7). The use of social media is also being used successfully to improve the quality of inter-professional education and international student partnership programs as the barriers of different academic calendars

and timetables, and costly interactive face-to-face learning could be overcome (8, 9). There was also support that the use of social media could be a structure in achieving Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives for facilitating, remembering, understanding, analyzing, applying, evaluating, and creating learning (10).

How does nurse educator use social media? An example is using Twitter as a teaching tool for students enrolled in a Critical Care Course at the University of Glamorgan, UK (11). Students accessed short video clinical scenarios and were encouraged to "Tweet" short messages on evolving condition of the patients on the video and respond to specific questions set by the teacher. At the end of the course, it was found that scaffolding of learning from simple to complex scenarios supported students' critical reflection and clinical decision-making using Twitter as a teaching and learning tool. Facebook was also successfully used in nursing graduate course were classes were held electronically, and students were encouraged to create blog site and post weekly commentary about health care and technology that they encountered at work. The students and teacher read everyone's blog and commented as desired. The end-of-course evaluations revealed that Facebook provided a creative way of interacting with their fellow students and enjoyed the online class activities (12).

However, integrating new technology into the classroom can be challenging with the varying sophistication in both learners and teachers. Some of these challenges include the availability of technology, knowledge and skills of users, organizational support, selecting refutable sites, and the issues of confidentiality and privacy (13). In addition, nursing students may not be aware of ethical or professional implications surrounding the use of online social networking sites. The American Nurses Association, Royal College of Nursing Australia, National Council of State Board of Nursing, and other nursing professional bodies have published social media policies for schools of nursing and ethical and responsible use of social media technologies practice guidelines. Important ethical practice to be aware of is: maintaining professional online boundaries, maintaining confidentiality online,

maintaining online privacy, mismanagement of patient records, revealing privilege communications, avoiding defamation, and many more ethical principles. As nurse academics, we all have a responsibility to teach our students appropriate personal and professional use of social media early in the program, engage students in ethical discussions around educational use of social media and protect the trust of fellow students, teachers, and patients (14).

Social media is commonplace in everyday life especially with the younger generation. As professional teachers in health care, it is high time to think and implement specific social interaction connectivity with our students. Can we use social media effectively in our teaching and learning as a new pedagogical strategy? Yes, we can! Let us all exert our efforts to use technology sensibly to ensure the profession of nursing extends itself beyond the four confines of the classroom using conventional learning and teaching approaches. It is also high time to let students know that nurse academics although approaching the ageing generation could effectively keep up with a new, wired student generation.

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