Case Study: Training Nurses to Teach Patients Peritoneal Dialysis

Proposal:

In 2005, the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Instructional Development & Distance Education was awarded a grant by the International Society for Peritoneal Dialysis (ISPD) to develop a training program for nurses who are teaching adult patients how to perform home based peritoneal dialysis procedures. The envisioned program would be Web based and adhere to accepted learning theory principles. Although the theory behind the instruction and subsequent recommendations would be grounded on evidence-based learning principles, there is, unfortunately, a dearth of established standards and practices for peritoneal dialysis training; therefore, there are few precedents to guide the development of the program. Furthermore, the training material must be comprehensible to nurses from diverse cultures, training, and experience. It must also recognize (or acknowledge) that actual practices, such as selecting the type of equipment to be used, often vary.

This case study highlights the challenges, barriers, and reconceptualization required to implement this training project. One of the key challenges was merging content that is typically taught in a clinical setting and, at the same time, teaching effective theory to the nurses. We wanted them to adopt these general teaching principles for use in all settings, yet the opportunity for immediate feedback and reinforcement that is so rich in a clinical setting (in which most nurses are comfortable) is not possible in a Web-based environment.
Another challenge involved the most effective use of video, considering the variability of technology available to a worldwide audience. Should we employ a directed instructional approach with a narrator commenting on important aspects of an illustrative video, or should it be simply an un-narrated visual demonstration allowing the viewer to identify the salient points? Additionally, the diversity of the audience created another challenge. Considering the variance in practices and locations, which practices should be included and, of these, which should be demonstrated? Who would appear in the videos? (Although using patients would be ideal, confidentiality issues prohibit this.) Finally, how should the video be formatted, and should other programming such as Flash be considered?

In summary, we will detail the development and milestones of this web based project, reflecting on the lessons learned, and comment on the feedback from peritoneal dialysis nurses who will have been exposed to the program. It is hoped that this training will become a benchmark from which other training will develop and evolve.