

Use of Blogging as a Learning Activity in an Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experience

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INTRODUCTION

At the University of Kentucky, PHR 928, Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experience I (IPPE I) is a 1-month long pharmacy practice experience for students completing their first professional year and the first in the students' experiential course sequence. Students are assigned to community pharmacy sites throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky. In previous years, students were required to write a 15-page daily activity journal and multiple 1-2 page papers on various topics, as well as variety of worksheets. Also, the last day of the rotation was an organized debriefing day in Lexington (main campus) where all of the students gathered face-to-face and shared their experiences with each other. Based on student feedback, there was a sense that the debriefing day may not contribute to as much student sharing as thought. It was decided to replace the one day campus debriefing session by utilizing student blogs throughout the month for students to share their experiences and reflections in real time with their classmates.

METHOD

The Blackboard™ course management system's blog function was used for this class, which allowed the students to be assigned to groups and have their activity monitored in a secure environment. The blogging feature was used to replace some of the old written activities, including the daily activity journal. Blogging allowed the students to view the daily activity of others. To increase communication and discussions with each other, students blogged on specific discussion topics throughout the month. These discussion topics were derived from the following past written assignments: drug information resources, communication, professionalism, quality assurance, pharmacy automation, and medication administration counseling. Students were able to view any classmate's blog in the course, but only required to comment on blogs in their assigned group.

Sample Blog Entry

IPPE Blog - Group 2A -- Assignment 10 Created on Wednesday, 05/13/2009 11:06 PM by Jane Student

Assignment 10 - The articles on quality assurance were very interesting. I have worked at // for a few years now and they try their best to implement many of the things the articles talked about, such as team meetings, scanners, and others. At // they also have a number of things in place to reduce errors. They use faxes for refill requests to and from doctors to reduce errors in hand writing and typing. Also, at this store they only have a few people that can type in prescriptions. This helps because these people do not do anything else in the pharmacy, therefore they don't leave the computer while doing something else leading to a possible mistake. The computer system they use checks for drug interactions while entering the prescription and the techs are taught to notify the pharmacist when this occurs. Also, when counting the medications, techs are taught to circle the NDC and verify it with the stock bottle. The pharmacist then verifies the stock bottle with the prescription and what is in the vial. This greatly helps to reduce errors. So although they do not have a scanner system like // they made sure to check the NDC three times. When the pharmacist then checks the prescription the check that everything was entered correctly and then the proper drug and estimated quantity is in the vial. At this pharmacy when an error is made the pharmacist politely says what error has occurred and asks what tech either entered or filled the prescription so they can know what mistake was made and maybe prevent it in the future.

Comments (3)

It seems that a lot of pharmacies have the computer systems for helping the pharmacist check for drug interactions, allergies and other possible problems that may occur. I have heard that // have moved to the scanning system but a lot of other pharmacies have not. I think that once the technology is around for awhile it will become cheaper and a lot more pharmacies will start using it.
Thursday, 05/14/2009 9:37 AM by John D. Student

I see that only certain individuals are allowed to enter new prescriptions at your site. At my site only pharmacists are actually allowed to enter new scripts. I found this very different than what I was used to. At // I was entering new scripts when I was in high school. However, I can understand the approach and see how it may be beneficial to reduce mistakes.
Thursday, 05/14/2009 12:11 PM by Solly A. Student

Good discussion. Thursday, 06/04/2009 1:45 PM by Anne PolICASTRI

The students were surveyed pre and post experience with regard to their attitudes toward using a contemporary method of communication, such as a blog, as a learning activity. The brief pre-survey was conducted during a live orientation to IPPE I via a TurningPoint™ Audience Response System. An online post-survey was conducted the last week of their rotation through CoursEval™.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results of the pre-survey showed that 94% of the students enrolled in IPPE I did not have their own blog and only 23% regularly read another person's blog. Discussions with students revealed that they did not consider social networking web sites as blogs. Therefore, the post-survey contained additional questions regarding social networking and the students' level of involvement. 85% of this class were involved in some type of social network (Facebook™, MySpace™, etc.) with family and friends as the primary contacts. Approximately 25% participated in micro-blogging (posting short status related statements).

Learning - Results of the pre-survey showed that the students did not think they could learn from another's blog. Post-survey results showed a dramatic change. Positive responses increased from 22% to 68%. In addition, 65% of students read another's experience that provided information that may have helped them during their IPPE experience and/or may help them in the future.

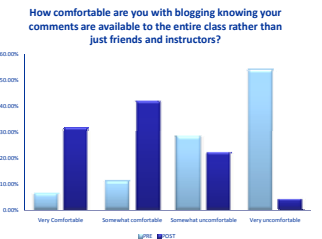
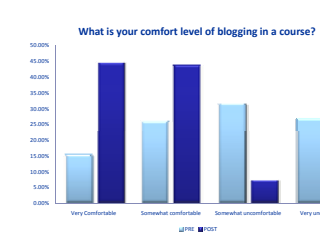


Discussions with students following the pre-survey revealed a misunderstanding among some of the students with regard to what the blog replaced. They were told the blog replaced the debrief day for the student sharing component of the past EPPE and some writing assignments. The students did not fully realize that the blogging activities also replaced four, 1-2 page writing assignments. As a result the following question was added to the post-experience questionnaire: "Would you have learned more on a topic working on a 1-2 page written paper than having a discussion with your preceptor, blogging about it and reading and commenting on other blogs?" Only 2.44% said they would have learned more from an individual writing assignment.

Communication & Connectivity - Initially, the goal was to show that the use of blogs allows improved communication and connectivity in a large class assigned throughout a rural state. Before the course started, the students indicated they would rather have a debriefing day instead of blogging. After the course, 72% indicated in the post-survey that they felt connected with their classmates through blogging and 80% of the students felt that they would not have been as connected had they only had a debriefing day. The time saved for the students by not having to travel back to Lexington was perceived to be somewhat to very valuable to 80% of the students.



Blogging Comfort - Initially, students revealed they were very uncomfortable with the idea of blogging for a course; however, it was discovered that a blogging experience in a previous course may have biased their responses. On the post-survey, 80% of students stated that their blogging experiences in a previous course affected their idea of what this blogging assignment would entail. Post-survey results were dramatically different with 89% of students indicating comfort in blogging for a course. Students also expressed varying degrees of comfort with blogging open to the entire class versus blogs that only instructors and friends will see.



STUDENT COMMENTS

- "... I would not have had access to so many opinions if this course had been conducted the way it was in previous years."
- "I think that blogging everyday helped keep in perspective what we were supposed to be learning..."
- "I felt more connected to the other students by reading their blogs."
- "It was comforting to know that they were all dealing with some of the same issues as I was, and it was also interesting to see the different things that they got to encounter and deal with while on their rotation at different sites."
- "At first I was apprehensive about it but looking back and slowly getting accustomed to the blogging each and every day it's honestly a great way to look back and even realize how much more you have learned, the confidence you begin to have as you worked more and the relationships and comfort level that comes about with this rotation from beginning to end. It was a good method to implement overall!"
- "It allowed me to see what other students were doing day to day, and use some of their experiences to influence my site and what I was doing there."

SUMMARY

Overall, students appeared to be in continuous communication with each other throughout the entire month. Survey results and instructor observations indicated that students shared and learned from each other. Student experiences were easily monitored. The blog allowed for educational IPPE I site specific topics to be discussed in a group, which did not happen before. The students were more reflective in their writing than in previous years. The blog improved the active learning component of this course as students read and commented on each other's experiences concurrently within the course.