

## Report on a grant received from the California State University Office of the Chancellor

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In the Fall semester of 2004 Carolyn VanCouwenberghe instructed Ed Barakatt in the mechanics of creating WebCT quiz questions for the Nursing 014 (Pharmacology) course. Ed Barakatt then created questions for the Nursing 014 course which were successfully utilized in the Fall 2004 semester.

Toward the end of the Fall 2004 semester Ed Barakatt received instruction by California State University, Sacramento University Computing and Communications Services in WebCT applications management including creating student access to course information on WebCT, posting course syllabi, lecture notes, and grades. Ed Barakatt was also instructed in how to create and manage quizzes/exercises using WebCT.

In the Spring semester of 2005 Ed Barakatt created an information competency exercise using the WebCT quiz function. This exercise was a required assignment in PT 222 (Research Methods in Physical Therapy II). All questions included in this exercise were related to information that would help students provide evidence based and legal physical therapy care. Questions were solicited from other faculty members in the Department of Physical Therapy to insure the broad scope of the practice of physical therapy was represented.

The initial questions of the information competency exercise had students perform a general search using a broad-based search engine (Google). Students were asked to obtain information from websites about specific diagnoses and treatments commonly seen in physical therapy practice. Subsequent questions directed students to specific websites/search engines that will be important for the students to be familiar with in their future practice. For example, questions were asked concerning legal issues of physical therapy practice requiring students to access documents on the California Physical Therapy Board website. Students were also asked to determine if specific journals were located at our university library, and to identify peer reviewed articles on various topics related to physical therapy from search engines created for health care professionals (e.g. PubMed, CINAHL, PEDro).

Students were encouraged to work together on this exercise so that those with more experience searching the World Wide Web could assist those with less experience. Students were required to achieve a score of 80% to successfully complete the exercise.

All students successfully completed this exercise. Feedback on the exercise was solicited and most students felt the exercise was worthwhile though one student felt otherwise. The limitations of this type of exercise were also noted. This was a "scavenger hunt" type of exercise where students are asked to find one fact using the World Wide Web with no depth of information obtained on any topic. The exercise provided students with experience in the mechanics of searching the world wide web, a tool they can build on to address more sophisticated assignments such as gathering evidence to support a specific treatment approach.

Another limitation I noted was the transient nature of information on the World Wide Web. It was my experience that a website changed over the course of the semester making a question obsolete before students could complete the exercise.

I believe the technique we utilized for helping students develop information competency is a good first step. It provides students with some basic tools for searching information. This tool can be used toward achieving the goal of physical therapy students learning how to gather the appropriate information for providing evidence based physical therapy.