BIRDS OF A FEATHER…
INTRODUCING A VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR GERIATRIC NURSING EDUCATORS

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Learning Object Repositories for nurse educators have the potential to transform the way faculty prepare, design and teach specialized, evidence-based geriatric nursing content. While searchable databases or learning objects repositories may increase faculty effectiveness and efficiency, their
potential is realized even more fully when combined with opportunities for discourse, cooperation, and collaboration among participants.

The Duke University School of Nursing (DUSON) Geriatric Virtual Learning Community (Gero-VLC) brings together researchers, educators, clinicians, geriatric specialists and instructional design consultants to promote learner-centered instruction methodologies to teach evidence-based geriatric care. Participants engage in knowledge construction, practical application, and community building. Self-governing and self-organizing, it is an online inquiry network where participants can borrow, share, and collaborate to promote in-depth learning and communication among participants to enhance their capacity for teaching geriatric nursing. The Gero-VLC houses multiple self-sustaining asynchronous discussion boards and themed web-logs (blogs). These virtual interactions overcome the barriers of distance and care setting.

The Gero-VLC also provides direct access to DUSON’s Center of Excellence in Geriatric Nursing Education Learning Objects Repository (Gero-LOR), which was built in collaboration with the NC State Education Department NCLOR initiative. The Gero-LOR includes structured learning objects (e.g., lesson plans, models, visuals), metadata (links to separate materials or strategies that can be incorporated in learner-centered instruction), and national, statewide, local and community resources that may be relevant to geriatric nursing educators.

This presentation will introduce DUSON’s Gero-VLC, discuss its philosophy and demonstrate how this knowledge building network applies adult learning principles to promote professional growth through opportunities for critical self-reflection, content appraisal, application of relevant teaching strategies, and communication with colleagues and other experts in geriatric nursing instruction. Participants will also be invited to virtually tour the Gero-VLC and the Gero-LOR.

Key words: knowledge network, virtual learning community, geriatric nursing education, learning object repository