Integrating simulation and other technologies into geriatric nursing curriculum.
Combining technology and simulation, Old Dominion University School of Nursing offers pre-licensure students a unique and safe environment in which to acquire the cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills necessary for patient care. By merging an on-line virtual hospital, high performance simulators (HPS), a personal response system (PRS) and recording of student performance, reality based active learning is enhanced by providing meaningful feedback to students.

Monarch General Hospital (MGH), a computer generated virtual learning platform, provides students with any-time/any-place web-based practice options. The culturally diverse patient population provides student exposure to varied populations. Gerontological scenarios include conducting a patient history / physical examination and caring for elderly patients with a variety of medical and surgical diagnoses. Students access information from the nursing shift report, patient chart, and the virtual patient who responds to student typed queries with a video clip. This strategy requires attention to auditory and body language clues simulating actual nurse-patient interactions. Online discussions enable students to share, compare and prepare collegially planned interventions for use with HPS scenarios.

The clinical practice laboratory contains the HPS. With MGH chart data, students develop nursing care plans specific for assigned scenarios. Strategically located cameras record student-patient interactions. Simultaneous or delayed recording/broadcast to another classroom for peer review and/or to the faculty’s office allows for debriefing upon completion of the scenario.

A Personal Response System (PRS) is used to interactively appraise assessment, intervention, and evaluation in simulated or virtual environments. Using PRS, faculty assesses student comprehension and provides immediate feedback while maintaining student anonymity. Engaging the student in an active learning process enhances instruction and stimulates discussion, especially when there are divergent responses. The combination of these technology-based simulation venues provides great flexibility and variability for teaching and active learning in a safe practice environment.

In addition to a course dedicated to gerontological nursing, geriatric nursing content is found throughout the BSN curriculum and students provide care for gerontologic patients in many clinical settings. The School of Nursing received the 2006 Award for Baccalaureate Education in Geriatric nursing from the John A. Harford Foundation Institute for Geriatrics/American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Key Words: Gerontology, Simulation, Virtual Hospital, Standardized Patient