Title: More than Evaluation: Student Nurses and Their Ability to Assess Online Health Resources and Verbalize Findings

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Theme: Open/Frontier

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Purpose: According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 8 in 10 Americans go to the Web for health information (http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Online_Health_2006.pdf). The Internet poses both a frontier that represents the possibility for vast exploration and an open space that leaves patients wandering through unreliable information. The purpose of this study was to determine the abilities of first-year (Junior-standing) nursing students to choose, evaluate and then explain their findings in relation to health information on the Web.

Setting/Subjects: 108 first-year nursing students in Foundations I at the University of Northern Colorado.

Methodology: Content analysis of written papers.

Results: Evaluation comprised of three cohorts (consisting of 36 students each) of first-year nursing students in Foundations I in their assessment of 216 websites. Each student was charged with researching a health topic and recommending one reliable website and censuring another website concerning the same health topic, with the objective of identifying, evaluating and verbalizing health information for patients. Although the majority of students are skillful in assessment of online information, their ability to verbalize their conclusions is lacking.

Discussion/Conclusion: For future nurses it is not only the information and content analysis that is important, but also the ability to communicate this information to patients and family members. The current generation of nursing students is incredibly web-savvy, but they still need practice in communication.