

Concept Maps

It has been said that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” A picture or concept map often teaches new nurses more about a given topic than the standard nursing care plan.

Concept maps are diagrams of important ideas that are linked together. These ideas are often patient problems and treatments. However, concept maps can be used for any topic, such as cultural beliefs, pharmacological effects, assessment data and many more.

Benefits of Concept Maps

Concept maps allow the nurse to:

- see the connections between ideas they already have
- connect new ideas to knowledge they already have
- organize ideas in a logical but not rigid structure that allows inclusion of future information or viewpoints

Critical thinking skills are used as the nurse analyzes the data, makes connections between data and evaluates the patients’ responses.

Concept maps can help the preceptor identify “missing links” or misunderstood information when working with preceptees. This allows for reviewing needed information or arranging other learning opportunities.

Resources

Hammer, J. & Recek, P. (n.d.) *Innovative Teaching Strategies for Nursing*. Retrieved on June 26, 2009, from <http://cord.org/txcollabnursing/onsiteconceptmap.htm>

Developing a Concept Map

Concept maps can be organized in numerous ways. They can look like a flow chart, a pyramid, a wheel with spokes or any other visual that makes sense for the nurse. Consider the following when developing your concept map.

1. Begin by gathering patient data from charts, reports or assessments.
2. Cluster the data into related concepts.
3. Identify the most significant problem.
4. Identify any missing data.
5. Identify relationships between data (weak, strong, indirect).
6. Prioritize nursing diagnosis and interventions.
7. Identify potential patient teaching needs.
8. Describe how the diagram can guide nursing practice.

As you develop your concept map, you can add supporting data to each concept. This helps to identify how things are interrelated when caring for patients, and one problem may affect numerous other problems.

To see various examples of concept maps, visit www-personal.umich.edu/~jmargeru/conceptmap/types.htm.

As a preceptor, you know the importance of identifying your preceptee’s learning needs. The concept map is one tool that you can use to identify your preceptee’s knowledge deficits. This tool also is helpful in meeting preceptees’ various learning styles. The concept map is excellent for visual or hands-on learners.

Concept mapping can be used in almost any setting and requires only a piece of paper and a pen. Maps can be developed individually, in small groups or in a large classroom setting. This is an excellent tool to use if patient census is low or the preceptee has not had much experience with a certain diagnosis.

Here’s a basic concept map on the benefits of this learning tool.

