Debating pain: A collaborative online group activity

Grace Tague, Liz Devonshire, Allan Molloy, Stephen Loftus, Philip Siddall
University of Sydney

This poster reports on an action research project investigating the development and implementation of an online debate activity in a core unit of study within the Graduate Studies in Pain Management Program. The activity required that students work in groups to debate the topic 'pain is merely a symptom, not a disease'. It aimed to encourage critical engagement with a contemporary pain management issue, promote collaborative learning in an online context, and provide opportunities for reflection on the benefits and challenges of the group process. Learning design considerations included the: timing and focus of the activity in the curriculum; structure and sequencing of tasks; scaffolds and learning supports required; and student readiness. Initial findings highlighted the engaging and enjoyable nature of the task. Students reported the activity encouraged adoption of a more critical stance towards the course content and provided them with a valuable and worthwhile learning experience. They also commented that the cross-disciplinary discussion enriched learning and enabled new insights into the management of pain. From a teacher perspective the activity reinforced the importance of providing enough structure and appropriate learning supports to assist learners collaborate effectively in the online environment and achieve a specific group task.

Keywords: online learning, collaborative learning, online debate, pain management

Author contact details

Grace Tague, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.
Email: gtague@med.usyd.edu.au.

Liz Devonshire, E25 - Royal North Shore Hospital, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.
Email: L.Devonshire@med.usyd.edu.au.

Allan Molloy, E25 - Royal North Shore Hospital, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.

Stephen Loftus, E25 - Royal North Shore Hospital, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.
Email: sloftus@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au.

Philip Siddall, E25 - Royal North Shore Hospital, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.
Email: philis@med.usyd.edu.au.

Copyright © 2006 Tague, G., Devonshire, L., Molloy, A., Loftus, S., Siddall, P.

The author(s) assign to ascilite and educational non-profit institutions a non-exclusive licence to use this document for personal use and in courses of instruction provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The author(s) also grant a non-exclusive licence to ascilite to publish this document on the ascilite web site (including any mirror or archival sites that may be developed) and in electronic and printed form within the ascilite Conference Proceedings. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the author(s). For the appropriate way of citing this article, please see the frontmatter of the Conference Proceedings.