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Seeing, Hearing, and Walking in your Patients Shoes: An Aging Simulation

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Because aging misconceptions are widespread in our society, it is important to consistently emphasize that aging people, like all people, are diverse. Common afflictions experienced by some older adults can influence their ability to be self-sufficient and affect their quality of life. First level undergraduate nursing students participated in a fun and engaging aging simulation sensitivity training program that allowed for reflection through engagement. Each activity in the ASiST aging simulation reinforced the importance of being aware of the older person's level of function. As the learner's progressed through the simulation exercises, they began to relate to the challenges faced by some seniors and think about their ability to accomplish activities of daily living as well as instrumental activities of daily living. The project uses a simulation kit designed by the Oklahoma Healthy Aging Initiative (OHAI), a program of the Donald W. Reynolds Department of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. Two aging awareness simulation kits were purchased through an Innovative Instruction Grant funded by the LA Tech College of Applied and Natural Sciences. The simulation design includes five 15 minute stations to simulate neuropathy, hearing loss, vision loss, language impairment, and mobility/balance difficulty. Students rotate in pairs through the stations and are given tasks to perform while wearing or using props to simulate selected deficits. Following the simulation, students fill out a five question survey designed by OHAI which asks them to rate their experiences on a Likert scale regarding increased understanding of age-related impairments, understanding of ADLs/IADLs and ability to live independently, how the experience will affect their nursing practice, usefulness of the simulation tool, and any additional comments.