



**SCHOOL NAME:** Kankakee Community College (KCC)

**INSTRUCTOR:** Kim DeYoung

## *Using SimChart in skills lab increases students' critical thinking abilities*

**Background:** *The nursing program at Kankakee Community College (KCC) in Kankakee, Illinois, offers an associate degree to prepare students to become registered nurses. The program consists of 11 courses for 45 credit hours, and the NCLEX pass rate has been around 97 percent the past two years. KCC also offers an advanced placement option for licensed practical nurses and a one-year certificate program to prepare students to become a practical nurse.*

**Issue:** *KCC wanted to provide students with a more realistic experience in the skills lab so that they would feel more confident performing the skills in the clinical area. The increased confidence would also enable them to interact better with patients while performing the skill.*

**Approach:** *In fall 2012, KCC implemented SimChart in the classroom and the skills lab for first and second semester students. First semester students perform some of their skills using SimChart in the first semester and all of their skills in the second semester. A faculty member created an electronic health record in SimChart based on a patient scenario. Students verify the order on the computer, as they would do in the clinical setting, perform the skill, and then document in the patient record. Faculty can provide immediate feedback.*

*Faculty also play the role of both teacher and patient so that students are encouraged to interact with patients as opposed to focusing only on performing the skill. There has been no increase in the time needed for skills lab and overhead might be reduced because supplies can be better organized.*

**Results:** *Faculty have noted improvement in students' critical thinking abilities and their comfort level in the clinical setting because of the more realistic experience that students have in the skills lab.*

**Benefits:** *Students are better at thinking through skills before entering the patient room; they can more easily identify key patient factors that should be considered before performing the skill. Students are also better at communicating with patients as a result of improved confidence in their ability. Finally, practicing with an electronic health record allows students to feel more comfortable with electronic health records in the clinical setting.*