

January, 2007 - Dr. Irene McEachen, Nursing

I would like to share a teaching tip that I have been successfully using in the graduate course: Administration in Healthcare Financing. The majority of students are nurses, with an MBA student included from time to time. My objective, in addition to having students knowledgeable re: budget creation and cost-benefit analysis, is to provide the students with an understanding of our current reimbursement systems. These systems include Medicare, Medicaid and the complex reimbursement methods used by managed care organizations.

Within these systems we uncover the threads of pluralistic and ethical issues, along with the financial ones, that are played out in the media. To accomplish this we turn to current events to graphically highlight certain aspects of healthcare financing that may not be obvious on first glance. If an uninsured person receives a transplanted organ, who pays? Should the donor of the organ be paid?

I give each student a newspaper or magazine clipping and have the student present the information to classmates. I urge the student to have a provocative question or two to ask classmates after the presentation. These provocative questions lead to debates that increase our understanding of some subtle financial aspects of the issue. It is easy to find clippings related to basic universal health care insurance, why we don't have it and how can we pay for it. How do we pay for the uninsured and do we support the Oregon "Death with Dignity Act"? What is the cost of maintaining patients on life support for months or years, and will this cost increase our personal insurance premiums?