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eMurmur

LITTMANN LEARNING CASE STUDY

Providing cardiac auscultation learning resources for students in hybrid nurse practitioner programs

THE CHALLENGE

Nowadays, it is common for many Nurse Practitioner (NP) programs to be offered primarily online with an additional on-campus component. Students in such programs are only required to attend on-campus activities a handful of times per semester. Although these programs offer students a flexible school schedule, meeting solely online presents the challenge of effectively teaching and training students in cardiac auscultation.

The opportunity for students to listen to real heart sounds and murmurs is limited since they cannot always be present in a clinical arena. Although they're given textbook readings and videos, students still lack a learning tool that provides real murmur and heart sound recordings.

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It's a challenge to teach heart murmurs if we're not in the clinical arena. But even when students and instructors are in the arena, we're waiting for a patient with a murmur. When that occurs, we call everyone into the patient's room to listen, but it is inconceivable for murmurs to be taught that way. That's the value of Littmann Learning; it can supplement students' learning to detect and recognize heart murmurs. There's a large library of specific murmurs that students can listen to and distinguish between.

Dr. Carol Rizer

Lead Faculty for Advanced Health Assessment at the University of Texas at Tyler, School of Nursing

WHAT IS LITTMANN LEARNING? CAN IT HELP MY PROGRAM?

Littmann Learning is an interactive app for students and trainees to use in building their confidence in cardiac auscultation. The app reinforces learning by offering self-directed learning modules, ranging from fundamental to advanced levels, on the student's mobile device. Students can access relevant background material related to heart murmurs for each module. Using the self-testing feature, students are provided with immediate feedback about the accuracy of their answers to each question. eMurmur's sound library contains real-life heart sounds and murmurs that range from pediatric to elderly patients. All heart sound and murmur recordings have been verified by cardiologists and echocardiograms.

Dr. Carol Rizer has been using Littmann Learning in her Advanced Health Assessment courses for two years at the University of Texas at Tyler, School of Nursing. She offers the first six learning modules (Fundamentals and Intermediate level) to her students as an additional tool for them to train in cardiac auscultation, as well as a way for them to earn additional course marks.

Every semester, several of her students take advantage of this opportunity and have mentioned that they've been very pleased with the app. Most of the time, students are listening to each other's hearts, and more often than not, they're listening to a healthy heart sound. By using Littmann Learning, students are exposed to a diverse range of heart sounds including pathologic and innocent heart murmurs. Since many of Dr. Rizer's students are already full-time nurses, the Littmann Learning app has proven to be useful for busy, on-the-go nurses as well.

“My students are already practicing nurses. I've received remarks that they are more perceptive in recognizing murmurs in the clinical arena with real patients in the hospital or in the clinic and that is very positive to hear!”

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