

# Introduction

Noel E. Wilkin

As the demand for educational accountability increases, faculty at schools and colleges of pharmacy are working to develop ways to delineate and assess the outcomes purported by their curricula. Upon developing the list of outcome abilities, academicians are faced with two challenges: (1) individual faculty are challenged with teaching in a manner that facilitates ability acquisition and (2) the faculty as a whole is charged with assessing the extent to which these abilities have been acquired. As a result, these changes necessitate the redevelopment of courses and improvement of instructors' teaching skills. This double issue of the *Journal of Pharmacy Teaching* will serve as a handbook for pharmacy educators and as a practical guide to assist them in improving their ability to educate in this new environment.

Teaching is moving toward a paradigm in which the students' skills and attitudes are developed along with the knowledge that is typically conveyed in pharmacy courses. The driving force behind this phase of pharmacy education evolution is the movement toward an ability-based approach to pharmacy education. The first paper, by Thomas Zlatic, will help educators understand ability-based education and how to identify abilities that can be facilitated within their courses. In this paper, Zlatic sets the direction for the issue; it is this need to develop

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students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes that warrants the implementation and utilization of educational strategies and methods that facilitate the acquisition of ability components. The strategies, skills, and tools addressed by this issue include active learning, communication skills, audiovisual technologies, effective handouts, and World Wide Web course support.

Active learning is the foundation for teaching strategies that foster the development of abilities. The paper authored by Peter Hurd will help educators understand the process of active learning and how to employ these strategies in the classroom.

To employ active learning strategies and to create an environment in which students can acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes being taught, educators need to have effective individual and group communication skills. Robert Beardsley describes the process of communication and how educators can effectively communicate in this new environment.

The multitude of hardware and software technologies can help educators to provide students with opportunities to acquire abilities. These technologies can augment the active learning environment and the verbal aspects of presentation content. William Felkey and Heidi Anderson-Harper describe the cognitive processes that can be influenced by visual presentations and provide tips that will assist educators in creating multimedia presentations that will help them to be more effective in the classroom.

In addition to verbal and visual presentations, many educators feel compelled to provide their students with take-home materials or handouts because these materials can assist in learning. Yet, educators do not spend much time ensuring that their handout materials will effectively assist the student in storing the information in memory. Noel Wilkin describes the relevant information retention and note-taking issues that impinge upon information acquisition and storage. He also provides several tips and formatting guidelines that will help to enhance handout effectiveness. This paper will assist educators in optimizing information retention, which, in turn, will serve to facilitate ability acquisition.

Greater access to the World Wide Web has increased the use of this user-friendly technology to support courses. David McCaffrey, Alicia Bouldin, and Kathy Gates discuss the use of this technology to support courses, describe issues in the use of this technology, and provide

some tips that will assist educators in using the World Wide Web to enhance educators' pedagogical efforts.

An essential step in ability-based education is assessment. This process evaluates whether students have actually acquired the abilities facilitated by the courses within a curriculum. This evaluation phase is required by accreditation organizations and completes the circle of the educational process. After the educator has read papers on abilities-based education and on strategies that educators can use to be effective, this paper by Michael Maddux will assist the educator in understanding the processes involved in assessing the influence of his/her educational strategies. Also, it will help educators understand how their actions at the course level are tied with overall programmatic assessment. In this paper, Maddux describes both assessment-as-learning and the institutionalization of assessment.

In summary, this issue explains (1) the ability-based educational approach, (2) the teaching strategies, skills, and tools that will assist educators in facilitating ability acquisition, and (3) the process of assessment that provides essential feedback regarding the effectiveness of those teaching strategies, skills, and tools. In essence, this issue of *JPT* addresses the educational process from the development of abilities to the assessment of abilities and covers many of the skills and tools used in that process.