Context and Contribution: Going Beyond the Research Paper in the Health Sciences

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Purpose
Transform a research paper assignment into a web-based presentation to better meet university student learning outcomes and integrate information literacy competencies into a pharmacy course.

Methodology
Students had previously been instructed to submit a written business plan as their final project for the course. Historically, no librarian had been involved in course design or provided in-class instruction. We saw an opportunity to use our existing technology and new embedded Health Sciences Librarian to re-design the project as a business plan proposal given by the students to key stakeholders in their hypothetical business. For their presentation, groups of students were tasked with using WordPress to create an interactive website. This gave the students a chance to develop skills in research, web design, citation, understanding copyright, and writing for publication. The librarian liaison provided targeted instruction throughout the duration of the course to assist students in developing these skills.

Evaluation
After the final presentations, the instructors and embedded librarian used the project deliverable (websites) to assess several key student learning outcomes. Students were also asked to complete a survey assessing the success of the new project.

Subjects
Thirteen upper-level pharmacy students enrolled in the Ambulatory Care elective course participated.

Results
The majority (92.31%) of students agreed that the re-designed project was an innovative assignment that had taught them new skills to succeed professionally. Of the respondents, the majority (73%) also agreed that they preferred the website to the paper format. Based on the rubric, a majority of student learning outcomes were met.

Conclusions
Results and evaluation show that the project was successful as far as meeting learning outcomes. However, student responses to survey indicate that future projects might benefit from enhanced library and technical support presence throughout the duration of the class to facilitate best use of technology. Additional in-class work time was also requested.

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