Education through Concept Mapping: Developing a Critical Thinking Approach
Paula R. Gaillen-Miller, RNC, MSN
University of Louisiana at Monroe

**Problem:** The purpose of this study was to measure the students' critical thinking skills within the clinical setting in developing a comprehensive approach to patient care.

**Evidence:** Concept mapping when used correctly allows the student to visualize a diagram which presents the interrelationships of patient care; including medical diagnoses, nursing diagnoses, assessment data, laboratory results, medications, and treatments.

**Strategy:** Concept mapping is directly related to evidence-based practice which allows students to critically solve problems in the clinical practice setting. Nurse educators are relying on this interactive teaching strategy to prepare students in caring for patients with today's complex medical conditions.

**Practice Change:** Our mission was for each student to prepare a concept map on each patient using specific evidenced-based data via the use of a diagram indicating interrelationships from the patient's physical assessment, diagnoses, patient goals, outcomes, and the nursing interventions the student plans on performing throughout the day.

**Evaluation:** This study focused on the data collected from nursing students enrolled in the clinical portion of the medical-surgical level. A 9-item likert scale was used to compare and calculate the data.

**Results:** The data indicated favorable results from the students.

**Recommendations:** My research data indicates that this project can be incorporated not only into BSN projects, but also into various clinical areas, where patient care and critical thinking skills are required.

**Lessons Learned:** Data has been collected and categorized during the last semester; I have incorporated an evaluation tool that has been highly profitable, and would like to share it with fellow colleagues. The evaluation tool itself will be displayed, along with the suggestions we have obtained from current students in our BSN nursing program.