The Great American Cookie Experiment: A Creative Teaching Strategy  
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Problem:  
With continued emphasis on evidence based practice, nurse educators search for innovative ways to engage staff nurses in nursing research. The topic of research can be intimidating for clinical nurses, which often creates barriers to participation in research. The HCHD Great American Cookie Experiment (GACE) provided a non-intimidating methodology to introduce nurses to research and provide hands-on experience using a fun topic.

Evidence:  
Getting clinical nurses excited and stimulated to learn the research process is not an easy task. Studies report that creative and innovative teaching strategies are critical to promote interest in the research process. The Great American Cookie Experiment is a teaching strategy that has been used successfully to teach Nursing Research.

Strategy:  
The HCHD GACE Nursing Research Program© was implemented over a period of 15 months and included 1-hour classes, a data collection practical experience, and a graduation ceremony. Clinical nurses learned to write PICO questions, critique articles, develop a protocol, obtain IRB approval, collect / analyze data, and disseminate study findings.

Practice Change:  
The GACE is conducted in 3 hospitals and 12 clinics annually. Participants complete a competency self-assessment at baseline, 6 months and upon graduation. Teaching strategies include didactic and hands-on training, peer to peer group work, a research terminology jeopardy game, and M&M sampling exercises.

Evaluation/ Results:  
Forty nurses attended the GACE program in 2009 and participated as study collaborators. 449 nursing staff volunteered as study participants. 26 nurses graduated in 2009. Enrollment increased by 40% for the second annual class series with 53 nurses graduating from the program in 2010. There are currently 60 nurses enrolled in GACE Year 3. Competency assessments have consistently identified growth in knowledge and skills with application of the research process.

Lessons Learned/ Recommendations:  
Acquired knowledge and skills can be applied to study clinical topics of interest. Creative approaches such as the GACE can be used by nurse educators as a methodology.

Bibliography:  
Hudson-Barr D., Weeks, SK., & Watters, C. (2002). Introducing the staff nurse to nursing research through the Great American Cookie Experiment. Journal of Nursing Administration, 32(9), 440-443.