



Opinion

# Enhancing student learning in self-care: The zombie apocalypse activity

David Caldwell, PharmD, AAHIVP\*, Laurel Sampognaro, PharmD

*Department of Clinical and Administrative Sciences, University of Louisiana at Monroe College of Pharmacy, Monroe, LA*

## Abstract

The objective of the article was to develop an in-class practical activity that will maximally engage professional pharmacy students of different learning styles. Psychological-type theory was used to inform practical activity development. The practical itself was assessed in a post-survey and compared to a pre-activity survey that identified motivating factors and desired characteristics of a practical activity that were stratified by Myers–Briggs Type Inventory<sup>®</sup> Sensing or Intuition preference. The practical also underwent faculty peer review by the volunteer faculty graders. Students' clinical knowledge was assessed with scenario-specific rubrics. Surveys reported that this activity was more engaging and a more effective assessment of learning and knowledge than practical activities students had previously encountered. Both students and faculty peers reported enjoyment in this unique approach.

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## Introduction

Standard 13 of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) requires that pharmacy school curricula address multiple topics such as communication skills, professionalism, critical thinking, problem solving, health and wellness, and teamwork across a variety of content areas. Standards 10 and 11 suggest that delivery of this content should ideally include active-learning strategies.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Center for the Advancement of Pharmaceutical Education (CAPE) outcomes address the need for educational experiences in which students provide patient-centered care that is evidence-based and can be communicated at a variety of levels, depending on the health care constituents involved.<sup>2</sup> Although some of these goals can

be difficult to accomplish in the traditional lecture setting, active-learning strategies provide the opportunity to deliver and reinforce this content as well as assess students' level of mastery.

Given that live attendance in colleges and schools of pharmacy is declining and educators are being called to enhance student engagement,<sup>3</sup> it stands to reason that faculty members should begin to experiment with novel approaches of content delivery and assessment. It has been proposed that innate differences exist that affect an individuals' preferences for learning experiences and that faculty should address these differences in their instruction.<sup>4</sup> Proponents of Jungian personality-type theory suggest that differences in personality as measured by the Myers–Briggs Type Inventory<sup>®</sup> (MBTI) can account for a number of learning style differences, including the types of material and experiences that students find engaging.<sup>5</sup> An ideal model for self-care instruction would therefore include opportunities for active learning that incorporate multiple topics and engage students in ways that appeal to more than one learning style or preference.

\* Corresponding author: David Caldwell, PharmD, AAHIVP, Department of Clinical and Administrative Sciences, University of Louisiana at Monroe College of Pharmacy, Monroe, LA 71201.

E-mail: [dcaldwell@ulm.edu](mailto:dcaldwell@ulm.edu)

## Rationale and objectives

In an effort to enhance student engagement, activities should be developed that combine those components that appeal broadly to innate learning preferences. The objective of this project was to design a self-care learning activity that does just that. This was accomplished in the form of the *Zombie Apocalypse Practical Activity (ZAPA)*, a novel fusion of multimedia and reality that supports diverse types of learning preferences.

## Background

At the University of Louisiana at Monroe College of Pharmacy, professional students in their fourth and fifth semesters complete *Self Care I and II*, a pair of four- and two-credit-hour courses, respectively, in which students are exposed to basic patient assessment skills required in the delivery of pharmaceutical and self-care, including determining if self-care is appropriate and recommending self-care treatment. Instructional methods used in the courses include traditional lecture-based presentations, in-class discussion of patient cases, small-group discussion, problem-based learning, individual projects, physical assessment technique demonstrations and returns, and practical activities. The majority of both courses, however, is comprised of traditional classroom lecturing.

In *Self Care II*, the ZAPA was introduced to enhance student engagement while providing formative assessment and supplemental teaching. This practical was designed with consideration given to certain aspects of the MBTI types of the class. See [Table 1](#) for a breakdown of the dichotomies, explanations of their key characteristics, and related demographic information of the enrolled students. According to type theory, individuals can be categorized into 16 distinct personality types based upon their preferences for four mental orientations and four mental functions. Because type theory explains a systematic way of understanding how

individuals gather and process information, its application to education is a natural step.<sup>5</sup> This project focused primarily on the Sensing and Intuition dichotomy, which describes the most basic learning style differences—those of perception. Sensing students prefer information that is concrete and practical and like to experience it as much as possible through their five senses. Intuitive students prefer more abstract and conceptual information and are often drawn to those ideas that inspire their imaginations.

Given the large disparity between Sensing and Intuitive student representation in pharmacy programs noted here and elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> the following assumptions were made about students enrolled in this course. First, that a traditional practical activity would appeal most to Sensing students who prefer to use the five senses in learning and prefer to attend to literal meaning found in concrete experiences. This is exactly what a traditional practical activity provides—the opportunity to engage with previously learned information in a tangible, contextual way. This vital portion of the educational experience is necessary for all students, but may not be the ideal method to best engage or motivate a student whose preferred function of perception is Intuition. The second assumption was that Intuitive students may not be inherently motivated by simple concrete experiences. Because we desire to maximally engage all students in their educational experiences in order to facilitate learning, we considered that these individuals are more engaged by situations that stimulate their imagination and inspire them. To engage both groups of students simultaneously, it has been recommended to provide sensory-rich materials and a big-picture context for learning situations, tap into students' interests, and attempt to have immediate practical uses for new skills.<sup>7</sup>

### *Description of the practical*

The ZAPA merges the elements of interesting and imaginary scenarios involving known members of the faculty and opportunities for concrete and realistic

Table 1  
MBTI dichotomies and their contributions to learning preferences<sup>5</sup>

Dichotomy description	Preference (percentage of students in <i>Self Care II</i> )	Contribution to learning preferences
Broad areas of students' interests	Extraversion (38.6) Introversion (61.4)	Wide varieties of interests Fewer interests studied to greater depth
How students perceive information	Sensing (79.5) Intuition (20.5)	Preference for concrete information that can be experienced through the five senses Preference for abstract, conceptual information that inspires the imagination
Describe the types of information that students like and trust	Thinking (43.2) Feeling (56.8)	Prefer to make judgments on information that is purely logical and analytical Prefer to make judgments on information that takes into account the human implications and effects
Organizational approach to learning	Judging (65.9) Perceiving (34.1)	Motivated by closure and prefer clear work plans Prefer to keep information flowing in and therefore resist closure

MBTI = Myers–Briggs Type Inventory.

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