

## A Cost-Effective Method of Skills Practice

By: Karen R. Olson, RN, MN, and [Carolyn L. Blue, RN, MS, MSN](#)

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### **Article:**

Practice equipment costs for students have soared in the last ten to fifteen years. The dilemma is how to achieve the required level of skill proficiency in a cost-efficient manner.

Due to the high cost of disposable equipment and supplies, our university could not afford to provide each student with a sterile unopened kit. We searched for a way for students to have the experience of opening a kit and using it for the first time in a simulated learning environment. Our teaching team in the Adult Nursing course decided to let the students purchase a large packet of materials to be used throughout the course.

The faculty first formulated the list of supplies that would be helpful to learning skills. Because the students could not purchase any items that were potentially hazardous, such as syringes and needles, these items were excluded from the list. Next, an estimated cost was obtained for each item. The cost, however, was in excess of what we felt was a reasonable expenditure. The faculty was then polled for what they felt were essential items and what they felt was a reasonable cost. The final cost for the packet was \$21.95.

With the assistance of the purchasing department, the supplies were ordered and sold to the students along with the course written materials.

Although there were a few problems with students not understanding the need to purchase packets, the overall experience was positive and the goal of a cost-effective method of skills practice was achieved. Students were able to practice with unopened supplies and could use the equipment until they were proficient. Faculty time was used more effectively and less clinical time was necessary to teach skills. Students increased their awareness of the cost of medical supplies which made them more careful of supply use in the clinical setting. An unexpected benefit was that students assumed ownership for their own learning.