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A three-step technique for teaching geriatric pharmacology to nurses

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There is a global increase in geriatric patients admitted to the hospitals. More than half of these admissions are often due to preventable pharmacological problems. Given the reported high rates of adverse events mostly related to medication errors and polypharmacy in the elderly patients, there is an urgent need for teaching of geriatric pharmacology to nurses who are often the first line of contact with patients. We report here a three-step approach. Step-1: Activation of learners' prior knowledge. Students are encouraged to come prepared with their knowledge of pharmacology learned. Step-2: Contextualization of students' learning. Using clinically common and important case scenarios, the teachers, who have in-depth understanding of pharmacology in geriatric patients, as well as being equipped with practical experience of prescribing, guide and assist the students to develop relevant conceptual frameworks in pharmacotherapy. This enables the nurses to comprehend the learned pharmacological content and their applications in the geriatric patients. This deepens students' understanding of pharmacology and their ability to apply into practical experienced by geriatric patients. Step-3: Metacognition-Students articulate their learning, applying pharmacokinetics and pharmacotherapy of geriatric patients. They reflect on how they would apply in the various scenarios. This will support the notion of training students in self-directed and lifelong learning. It is important for the students to identify their learning needs as they serve in various medical and surgical disciplines. Applying the three-step technique in the teaching of geriatric pharmacology to nurses promotes self-directed and lifelong learning mindsets in the ageing population. It also stimulates greater interest in the learning of pharmacology.

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