

Gould, K. (2013). Comparing changes in content knowledge between online problem based learning and traditional instruction in undergraduate health professional students. (Doctoral dissertation, Towson University, 2013).

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#### Dissertation Abstract

Problem Based Learning (PBL), a student centered instructional strategy, has been implemented in the education of health care professionals to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. PBL has also been proposed as an instructional method that provides for active and collaborative learning in the online environment. Current research is inconclusive regarding the effect of PBL on content knowledge change and critical thinking skills (Colliver, 2000; Worrell & Profetto-McGrath, 2007). Furthermore self-directed learning readiness (SDLR) and motivation have been identified as attributes that may affect student success in PBL and online learning environments. This study investigated changes in student content knowledge after participation in an online PBL module or traditional instruction in an undergraduate nutrition course. The study also examined the relationships between student SDLR and motivation and content knowledge change. The findings of this study indicated that online PBL was as effective as traditional instruction in promoting content knowledge change. Student attributes of SDLR and motivation did not affect the observed change in content knowledge. These outcomes demonstrate that online PBL is an effective alternative to traditional instruction in undergraduate health professional students. The majority of these students had high levels of SDLR and motivation indicating that they were prepared for this student centered instructional strategy.