THE WILDERNESS INSTRUCTOR

Other voices

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When I accepted the position of section editor for “The Wilderness Instructor,” I had a list of topics on which I wanted to write. However, I would welcome submissions from other instructors. My goal is to use this column to share proven ideas on how to teach wilderness emergency care at all levels, from short workshops and wilderness first aid courses to courses designed for medical professionals. Possible topics include planning, organizing, supporting, publicizing, managing, and evaluating classes, as well as teaching methods.

What kind of articles am I looking for? The criteria are essentially the same as for a research or review article. Think of your classroom as a laboratory and look for evidence of how well your ideas worked (or didn’t work). In addition to your observations, this evidence may include student participation and evaluation forms, as well as their performance on practical and written examinations. Naturally, you should explain the procedures and grading criteria for your examinations, as well as summarize the results.

I am especially interested in articles that compare the results of doing courses in different ways. For example, some instructors teach an intensive course over a weekend or more, which keeps students busy day and night. Other instructors space out the course sessions with time for preparation in between. What differences does it make in the quality of student performance in class activities and examinations, or in the percentages of students who complete and pass the course? What about the ratio of talks to hands-on practice? Have you changed that significantly, and what difference did it make? What about the use of scenarios and teaching indoors or outdoors? What types of instructors in your programs have been most effective, and what characteristics do they have in common (eg, experience, teaching style)? What types of students have you taught, and what effects did their background and motivation have on the results?

By sharing, analyzing, and documenting our experiences at teaching wilderness emergency care, we can accumulate evidence of what does and does not work, and help each other to become better instructors.

Have you used your wilderness emergency care skills?

If you have ever taken a wilderness first aid, wilderness first responder, wilderness emergency medical technician, or wilderness medicine course, seminar, or workshop, please answer the questions listed below and send your responses to me by e-mail or regular mail. I hope to collect enough data to do a study on what knowledge and skills people actually use in wilderness emergencies (or in preventing potential emergencies). I will then correlate the data with course curricula. The results should be useful to instructors in deciding how much time and what kind of training they need to devote to each topic.

COURSE INFORMATION

Name of course

Length of course (in hours)

Type of course:

Lecture only

Included skills practice

Included role-playing scenarios

- Name of certification (if any)
- Organization issuing certification

Please indicate in the checklist below the problems that you avoided or treated, based on what you learned in the course, and write a brief description of each, including the situation, problem, and treatment or measures of prevention.

INJURIES

- ☐ Wound
- ☐ Burn (fire, hot object, hot liquid, sunburn)
- ☐ Fracture
- ☐ Sprain
- ☐ Dislocation
- ☐ Head injury
- ☐ Spinal injury
- ☐ Other

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

- ☐ Heat illness
- ☐ Hypothermia

- ☐ Frostbite
- ☐ Altitude illness

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

- ☐ Snakebite
- ☐ Arthropod stings
- ☐ Arthropods, parasites (eg, mosquitoes, ticks)
- ☐ Animal attacks
- ☐ Plants
- ☐ Contaminated water

MEDICAL PROBLEMS

- ☐ Cardiovascular
- ☐ Respiratory
- ☐ Diabetic
- ☐ Gastrointestinal
- ☐ Psychological
- ☐ Other

IN WHAT CAPACITY WERE YOU PROVIDING EMERGENCY CARE?

- ☐ Paid professional (guide, trip leader, instructor, ranger, other?)
- ☐ Volunteer leadership position (please describe)
- ☐ Recreational activity (please describe)
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Were you helping a member of your group or a stranger?

What specific training in the course you took helped you to cope with the problems that you described?

Based on your experiences, what changes or improvements would you suggest in the course that you took?

Please return your response to Steve Donelan, PO Box 1227, Berkeley, CA 94701 (e-mail: donelan@mindspring.com and website: www.mindspring.com/~donelan).