

‘Should Jack and Jill Go Off The Pill?’ - Application of an Interrupted Case Study to Facilitate Student Learning

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In large introductory biology courses designed for non-majors, it is difficult to stimulate student interest in important core topics such as genetics. This mini-workshop is based on an actual case of a couple with a family history of Fragile-X-Syndrome. The workshop is designed to engage students by role play in which the students actively portray the couple during their discussion on starting a family. Students are divided into groups of five or six to facilitate peer discussion and instruction. During the discussion, information is presented in an interrupted case study format and students are asked to generate a list of questions to be exchanged between the worried couple and a genetics counselor. Students will be given relevant family histories and asked to construct and evaluate a family pedigree for Fragile-X-Syndrome. Based on their data, discussion, and interpretation each group of students will formulate a recommended course of action for the couple. The groups will then present their recommendations to the class via directed discussion. This method is well suited for laboratory courses where students can be sorted into learning teams. This format encourages problem solving, group discussion, and peer teaching while providing the instructor with opportunities to interact both with the groups and individual students. By using the small group and interrupted case study methods, instructors can monitor student progress, provide immediate feedback and direction during individual group discussion, and simultaneously check the progress and logic of the group's reasoning.

The entire case study along with teaching notes will be published online at The University of Buffalo's National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science. This case study and many others can be accessed at: <http://library.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/case.html>.

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