Introduction
Anatomy students frequently experience anxiety related to their first exposure to cadaveric specimens. (Horne et al,1990; Izunya et al, 2010). Izunya and colleagues reported that as many as 55% of Nigerian medical students experience emotional shock at initial exposure to cadavers (Izunya et al, 2010). Literature suggests that emotional preparation for cadaveric studies is needed prior to the students entering the anatomy laboratory for the first time. (Arra’ez-Aybar et al, 2008; Shalev and Nathan 1985). While many studies examined the emotional and physical reactions experienced by the students of anatomy (Horne et al, 1990; Izunya et al, 2010, Arra’ez-Aybar et al, 2008; Shalev and Nathan 1985), only one study attempted to address it, to our knowledge (Casado et al, 2011), using an audio-visual resource.

Method
In order to address student anxiety related to cadaveric studies, the Faculty of Science, Transition and Retention (STAR) team, in consultation with teaching and technical staff from the School of Community Health, developed a 10 min DVD. The major themes included in the DVD are shown in Figure 1.

Results
In the first-year cohort, 192 students completed the questionnaire before watching the DVD and 183 students completed it after viewing the DVD. 107 second-year students completed the questionnaire before watching the DVD and 2nd-year students reported anxiety rating of 8-10 and 28% rated their anxiety at 5-7. After viewing the DVD, 4% of first-year students rated their anxiety at 8-10 and 27% rated it as 5-7. 9% of second-year students reported anxiety rating of 8-10 and 33% rated their anxiety 5-7. Figure 2 shows student responses to questions related to anxiety, emotional issues and safety rules in the anatomy laboratory. 79% of second-year students agreed or strongly agreed that they would have liked for the DVD to be available to them before they started cadaveric studies.

Discussion
The results suggest that first-year anatomy students felt less anxious and more emotionally prepared for cadaveric studies after watching the DVD. They also felt that they better understood laboratory safety rules and were able to answer more safety rules questions correctly after the DVD viewing. High levels of anxiety can inhibit student performance in the classroom and during assessments (Cassady and Johnson, 2002; Randall and Binding, 2004; Blankstein et al., 1992; Zohar, 1998). Students studying anatomy by distance particularly commented on the stress reducing effect of viewing cadavercial labs they did not enter the lab until their residential school began. The fast pace of the residential school meant that emotional adjustment had to occur quickly. A proportion of first-year students (7%) indicated a high level of anxiety (8 or above). Comments obtained from the students suggest that seeing the laboratory and what was going to happen rather than to hear about it made them less anxious.

This study focused on students’ perception of their anxiety and emotional state and therefore it did not measure anxiety scale objectively nor did it measure students’ performance in class. More studies will be needed to fulfill this goal.

References
Randall, J. & Binding, L.L. (2004). Anxiety as a barrier to student performance: This article explores student anxiety, one of the many possible barriers to the therapeutic relationship between the student nurse and the patient. The Canadian Nurse, 100, 7.

About authors:
Michelle Moscova
Michelle manages pre-lab project at the Faculty of Science, Charles Sturt University. Her main research interest is innovations in anatomical education

Contact: Dr Michelle Moscova
Phone: (02) 6338 6575
Email: mmmoscova@csu.edu.au