

NURSING STUDENTS ARE WANTED... AND NEEDED!

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SimMan® Recreates "Real Life" Scenarios

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HONING SKILLS THROUGH CLINICAL SIMULATION

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HONING SKILLS

Through Clinical Simulation

"The post-op patient was going into hypovolemic shock," shares a junior BSN student at Jefferson School of Nursing in Philadelphia, Pa. "He was hollering at me, the vitals were dropping, I had to think quickly—what's my first nursing intervention? Who do I call? How can I utilize my resources? How can I reassure my patient?"



One JSN student examines the simulated patient as another observes.

The stress and the practice of fundamental nursing skills were real. The patient, however, was not. He was SimMan®, playing the patient in a clinical simulation exercise that students went through in their first months of nursing education.

Clinical simulation is a teaching strategy that mimics encounters in nursing practice, enabling students to experience real life sit-

uations outside of the classroom or clinical arena. The goal is to improve students' skills using scenarios involving providers, patients and family members.

"Students expect to engage in realistic scenarios while they learn how to be a nurse," explains Kathryn Shaffer, RN, MSN, an instructor who teaches nursing fundamentals and patient safety at Jefferson School of



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A student talks to a standardized patient portraying the patient's wife.

Nursing. "Clinical simulation provides a way for them to acquire and practice essential nursing skills, assessments and communication techniques."

Jefferson students had their first clinical simulation exercise in the first weeks of the semester. It focused on safety, ethical issues and medication errors and it "took the edge off their anxiety," shares Ms. Shaffer. One student shares, "It was a great hands-on learning activity that made me better understand and realize every safety precaution that needs to be taken." Another echoes, "It was a great way to get us ready for our first day of clinical."

Even after they have some experience in the clinical setting there are some things, like getting a verbal order from a resident, that students may not experience until they graduate and are practicing.

Clinical simulation offers a safe environment for students to have a variety of encounters while they learn basic skills.

Jefferson students had a second simulation at the end of their first semester. The scenario followed a patient from emergency room admission through surgery and finally to discharge. Students don't typically get to experience this entire cycle with patients. This exercise also included a standardized patient, an actor trained to portray the wife of the patient.

While groups of students took turns participating in different stages of the scenario, the rest of the class observed them via streaming video feed and engaged in discussion led by a faculty member about evidenced-based practice.

After their scenes, each group met with instructors to problem-solve, self

reflect and identify areas for continued learning. This debriefing was held in a private and non-threatening environment, where a mutual exchange of information occurred.

In feedback one student said the experience showed her how much she had learned in less than one semester and helped her acknowledge what skills needed more work. Plus, "I had a really fun time doing it." Others agreed with that sentiment and requested more opportunity for hands-on simulation practice.

"All nursing education aims to promote increased confidence and competence in the clinical setting," says Ms. Shaffer. "We don't know if simulation translates into increased clinical competence, but we do know that students say it helps them integrate nursing concepts and skills." •

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