

Simulated and standardized patients in health profession education

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Valorization

RELEVANCE

The research presented in this doctoral thesis addresses topics about the quality of simulated patient (SP) performance in terms of role-play and feedback and also considers the impact of the improved quality on its stakeholders. The relevance of this research is explained by the two research questions that were put forward in the thesis.

It was shown that the quality of SP role-training can be improved. Our investigation confirmed that SP role-training with video positively affects the quality of SPs' role performance. SPs trained with the help of any kind of video are able to perform their role more accurately according to a standardized script. This is of great relevance when it comes to high stake examinations such as the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), because students are afforded the possibility of a consistent presentation of the patient case.

As quality is defined as the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs, there was need for an instrument that monitors the quality of oral SP feedback to the healthcare student after an encounter. Our research into validating such an instrument was important because previously no such instrument existed. In the literature the importance of feedback is emphasized, as it fosters student learning. Monitoring the quality of SP feedback to healthcare students is therefore of major relevance to students' learning.

The question of how SP methodology affects real practice (real patients, clinical supervisors) is also important. Our research on the impact of the SP methodology in clinical practice has shown that healthcare students trained with SPs showed better communication skills with real patients than students who were trained with peer role-play. These findings are important, as it is known that communication skills are of paramount importance for healthcare professionals working with patients. It is argued that without appropriate communication skills, the better part of the clinical efforts in medical care may be wasted. It has also been demonstrated that patient-centred communication improves diagnostic efficiency, physicians' and patients' satisfaction and treatment outcomes.

TARGET GROUPS

Management in healthcare education

It is assumed that administrators of universities and healthcare institutions are highly interested in quality and patient safety. This thesis presents empirical research contributing to quality and safety. Learning with SPs has a positive impact on healthcare students' communication skills in clinical practice. This is recognized not only by the

patients but also by clinical supervisors who are responsible for students' learning during their internship in clinical practice. Students like to be trained with SPs, because it gives them the possibility to learn in a safe environment without harming real patients. It is further assumed that students prefer universities or other health education institutions, where they have the possibility to train in a skillslab with SPs. An SP program of good quality can be a motivating factor for students in choosing such an institution for their studies, which, on the other hand, could be an interesting aspect for administrators in gaining students for their educational institutions.

SP trainers

This thesis shows that the behaviours of SP trainers and SP coordinators are crucial for the quality of SP performance and the well-being of the SPs. They should be familiar of how SPs can be motivated for high quality performance and have expertise in the domain of engaging and working with SPs. Training and programme staff should also be knowledgeable regarding the needs of SPs, and possess interpersonal skills and have experience in development and advancement of SP education and research in the health sciences. Based on the results of the last study in this thesis, a non-static and context-adaptable SP oriented working spread-sheet (SOWSS) was developed. This may be relevant in supporting SP trainers and SP coordinators to plan and organize training events from an SP-centric point of view. It thus constitutes a good basis for setting up and maintaining SP programmes and conducting SP training sessions.

Simulated Patients

This thesis shows that research with SPs is rewarding. The research combines three studies using quantitative and one using qualitative methodology. In the qualitative study the SP perspective of their work place satisfaction was conducted in individual interviews SPs from different institutions. The results of the interviews indicated that they generally like feedback on their performance from the SP trainer. They also like to be well prepared for their role -training and appreciate it when the trainer delivers information about the illness they have to portray, so that they can act the role as authentically as possible. SPs like to be treated in a supportive manner. Also, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are important for SPs so they are able to perform of high quality. To give SPs a platform to communicate their needs and listen to them is important and helps them to perform the way it is expected.

ACTIVITIES

This thesis contains empirical studies conducted in the context of the undergraduate nursing programme at the Bern Centre of Higher Education in Nursing, Switzerland. Activities which were conducted associated with this thesis were three Swiss Conferences on Standardized and Simulated Patients and Simulations (SPSIM) in 2009, 2012 and 2014. The SPSIM Conference took place in close cooperation between healthcare institutions such as the universities and schools of nursing in Switzerland. In the concluding panel discussion at the SPSIM Conference in 2014, held at the Bern Centre of Higher Education in Nursing, in the presence of a delegate from the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, visions of the future were discussed that should be pursued in further discussions. There was agreement among the participants and leaders of the institutions involved that it would be worthwhile to think about an inter-institutional skills and simulation strategy to pool common resources. The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health offered financial support for further development of the subject. In the summer of 2015, a nationwide survey was developed to evaluate the “status quo” of simulations in health profession institutions. The results formed the basis for a workshop on the development of Swiss inter-institutional collaboration on a national strategy for skills- and simulation which was conducted in November 2015, thus providing the basis for new development in the field of simulation and SPs.