

# Florida Encourages Simulation and Innovation in Clinical Education. Will Other States Follow?

*New legislation allows nursing students to perform half of their clinical training through simulation*

On May 1, 2014 Florida's State Senate passed a bill (S 1036) allowing the state's nursing schools to substitute up to 50% of their bedside clinical training hours with clinical simulation. This is great news for nursing schools struggling to find enough clinical sites for students and recruiting adjunct faculty to demanding yet low paying clinical instructor positions while keeping tuition low enough to remain competitive.

The State Legislature in Florida has wisely left the definition broad enough to accommodate many forms of simulation, recognizing recent innovations in technology will likely be repeated and accelerated in the future:

"Clinical training" means direct nursing care experiences with patients or clients, or clinical simulation of such experiences, which offer the student the opportunity to integrate, apply, and refine specific skills and abilities based on theoretical concepts and scientific principles. (SB 1036, 41-45)

Clinical simulation can employ different methods, not just expensive manikin-based simulations that require intense faculty time and training and equipment.

Nursing programs should evaluate the full spectrum of simulation technologies available and understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of each before deciding which method is best for their program and their students. In many cases, more than one method is best for ensuring students meet competencies like those outlined in IOM reports (2003, 2011) and by QSEN.

In general, there are three major simulation methods:

1. **Manikin-based simulations.** Manikin-based simulators but do well at marrying skills-practice with the ability to react to changing patient status. However, they are expensive to build and maintain, and require significant supervision from faculty.
2. **Standardized patients.** Standardized patients are people (often actors) who help carry out a scenario where they present various symptoms or complaints to student nurses. This method is also time intensive, but when done well they allow nurses to develop solid therapeutic communication techniques.

3. **Online Interactive video simulation.** Video simulations are a growing trend within nursing education because they are scalable and don't require as much direct faculty supervision as manikins and standardized patients, and due to advances in algorithms that create "branching logic," where a scenario unfolds in new directions based on a students' choices during the simulation.

My company, ATI Nursing Education, offers two interactive video simulations. Real Life™ Clinical Reasoning Scenarios and Nurse's Touch have been used to give students experience with high-risk patients and patients experiencing life-threatening emergencies, to gain multicultural experience, to gain clinical exposure in areas where clinical placements are a challenge, and more. Primarily, Real Life™ gives students a chance to practice clinical reasoning, delegation, prioritization, and other vital psychomotor skills with a "standardized patient" in a controlled and safe environment.

As programs work through the implications of Florida's decision to expand the definition of clinical education, it should be said that simulation is not a panacea to these challenges. It is true that simulation will never be the same as "the real thing;" but traditional, hospital-based clinical rotations have never provided a perfect training environment either. Simulation excels at preparing someone for the rare and the unexpected. Just ask Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, who saved hundreds of lives by successfully ditching his Airbus A320 in the Hudson River in 2009. Neither he nor any member of his crew had ever flown a disabled plane before that day, but all had learned what to do by practicing time and again in a flight simulator (Tagliareni, 2009).

As other states likely follow Florida's lead, there is no doubt simulation is a critical component for the future of nursing education. Everyone at ATI is eager to help you identify your simulation needs and build a program that works for you, as you prepare the next generation of nurses for the complexity and unpredictability of "the real thing."



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