Focusing Feedback on Interpersonal Skills: Practice Makes Perfect
A Web-Based Tutorial For Standardized Patients

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Abstract *Focusing Feedback on Interpersonal Skills: Practice Makes Perfect* is a Web-Based learning environment enabling standardized patients (SPs) to develop, practice and enhance constructive feedback skills. The Web-based training environment for SPs features realistic professional healthcare provider/patient video scenarios, graphics, audio and immediate feedback in a student-centered self-instructional environment. SPs, who are trained to simulate an illness and portray a patient in a realistic and consistent way, subsequently provide feedback from a patient's perspective to students undergoing communication and interpersonal skills training in health science fields like medicine and nursing.

Background. SPs are people from the community who represent a cross-section of ages, sexes, socioeconomic status, and educational levels[1]. To effectively help health care professionals foster positive healthcare provider/patient relationships, SPs must themselves be trained in concepts of constructive feedback. At the University of Texas-Health Science Center in Houston, this feedback training occurs in two phases. Phase I employs a workshop designed to teach the concepts and components of constructive feedback.[2] Phase II uses a small group workshop designed to aid practice of feedback skills. *Focusing Feedback on Interpersonal Skills: Practice Makes Perfect* provides an alternative learning environment for Phase II developed using a synthesis of Conditions of Learning[3], Andragogy,[4] and Constructivist theoretical frameworks.[5] These frameworks particularly emphasize previous experience, autonomy, and learning styles.[4,5,6]

System *Focusing Feedback on Interpersonal Skills: Practice Makes Perfect* is divided into three sections with practice scenarios followed by appropriate questions. A video clip, audio clip or paragraph of text, first presents a brief scenario. The following question then reviews and reinforces learning while providing informative feedback. While written primarily in HTML, JavaScript and Java implement more sophisticated levels of learner control, interactivity and immediate feedback. Microsoft SQL Server stores learner information and scores.

Focusing Feedback on Interpersonal Skills: Practice Makes Perfect provides:
- Multiple opportunities for practice
- Immediate feedback
- Feedback focused on correcting deficiencies
- Access to training on an as needed basis
- A personal and private setting for SPs uncomfortable in a large group setting
- Pacing individualized to SP needs

Evaluation Evaluation employs Campbell and Stanley's "Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design"[6], a true experimental design, to compare the effects of the conventional Phase II workshop and the new Web-based learning environment. SPs, pretested on measures assessing cognitive training objectives, are randomly assigned to the two treatments and posttested on cognitive, affective, and usability measures following training. Comparisons among the pretest and posttest scores of the two learning environments then reveal whether differential cognitive and affective treatment effects occur.

Conclusion Web-based formats have been shown to be highly effective for certain types of advanced knowledge acquisition.[7] It is expected that pattern will continue with *Focusing Feedback on Interpersonal Skills: Practice Makes Perfect*. The learners have flexibility, individualized pacing, unlimited access, and a highly customized tutorial learning environment specifically designed to target their own learning styles.

References
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