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Rosemary T. Theroux University of Massachusetts Medical School

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Effects of Standardized Patient Encounter on Graduate Nurse Practitioner Student Learning and Performance of Genital Examinations

Rosemary Theroux, RNC, PhD
University of Massachusetts Worcester Graduate School of Nursing

Carole Pearce, RNC, PhD
University of Massachusetts Lowell Department of Nursing

Purpose

Previous methods for teaching genital examinations to nurse practitioner students enrolled in a laboratory portion of an advanced health assessment course have included videotapes, plastic models for both male and female genital examinations, and voluntary examinations of a classmate for the female exam.

Standardardized patients are specially trained consumers who teach physical examination techniques during the student's performance of the examination. Medical schools have successfully used these patients to teach physical assessment.

The purpose of this study was to determine if standardized patients were the best method for graduate nurse practitioner students to learn genital examinations in comparison to previous teaching methods.



Population

26 graduate students (24 females, 2 males) from the FNP and Psychiatric NP specialties who were enrolled in the advanced health assessment course from 1999-2002.

Three cohorts of students participated. Each had a different teaching strategy for learning the genital examination:

Group 1 (n=13): voluntarily examined classmates for the exam performed male exam on a plastic model

Group 2 (n=9): performed pelvic exam with a standardized patient and performed male exam on a plastic model

Group 3 (n=4): performed both male and female exams with standardized patients



Method

A comparative descriptive design using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Surveys consisting of closed-ended questions with Likert scales and open-ended questions were filled out by students anonymously at two points in their education:

- 1) after learning genital examination the laboratory
- after performing genital examinations in clinical sites for 1-2 semesters.

Findings

Some of the students in group 1 felt uncomfortable performing a pelvic examination on a classmate. Only half of this group felt that this teaching method was an appropriate or positive learning experience. After the laboratory session half felt that they had an adequate understanding or felt confident about performing exams as a beginning NP student.

Students in groups 2& 3 were pleased with the standardized patient and relieved not to have to do this examination on a classmate. In contrast, 100% of these students felt that the experience was positive and an appropriate learning experience.

The students in group 3 felt that the male and female standardized patients were excellent & reported that their anxiety was low while learning the examination techniques

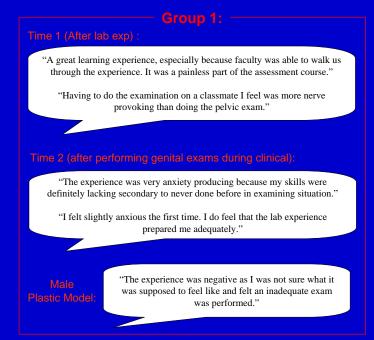
All of the students felt that it was important to perform at least one genital examination before performing the exam on a client and that a plastic model was inadequate for either male or female examination.

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STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that genital examination is best taught by standardized patients. The challenges for NP faculty may include access to standardized patient programs for their students and determination of funding to pay for these programs.

The standardized patients were from the program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School





"The standardized patient created an environment that was conducive to learning and helped me feel more comfortable." "It was excellent. No other method could suffice."