REALITYWORKS SUCCESS STORY

Hands-on Learning Tools Enhance Connecticut Nursing Program

For Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) Simulation Coordinator Rose DeSiena, M.Ed, RN, selecting learning aids for her simulation lab is as much about practicality as it is about realism. The “unfolding” simulations that she facilitates, which evolve over time in ways that are unpredictable to her junior and senior BSN students, run for 3 hours or longer at a time; significant preparation and cleanup is required to ensure that each one is as realistic as possible.

When DeSiena began working at SCSU in July 2018, she immediately noticed that the IVs on the simulation lab manikins were not running. Although it’s common for hoses to break down with repeated use, DeSiena wanted to create learning experiences for her students that were as true-to-life as possible – and that meant running IVs that she could use with standardized patients as well as manikins.

“I had to figure out a way to make these IVs run without having to worry about putting them directly into a manikin,” said DeSiena, who has been teaching simulation for 10 years. “Well, I found an answer: your IV Ivy Administration Trainers.”

Realityworks’ IV Ivy Administration Trainer is a wearable trainer that allows users to practice IV fluid and medication administration and flushing on manikins or real people. According to DeSiena, the trainers were so successful that her department purchased several others.

“My students were really excited that, with these trainers, they could actually run an IV into a drainage collection bag, so it really looks like it’s hooked up to somebody.”

“With these trainers, you’re bypassing any hoses in the manikin. Plus, you can take them on and take it off; they’re easy to manipulate,” said DeSiena. “Simulation is completely hands-on, but if you don’t have equipment that’s being utilized; if you have things that are broken, then your students aren’t getting real experience. My students were really excited that, with these trainers, they could actually run an IV into a drainage collection bag, so it really looks like it’s hooked up to somebody.”

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DeSiena has also used Realityworks’ Buttocks Dorsogluteal Intramuscular Injection Simulator, which uses lights to indicate immediately whether a user’s dorsogluteal injection is administered at the right location and depth. One side of the simulator is covered in realistic skin and the other side is transparent, giving students clear landmarks of internal bones, nerves and veins.

“When you’re instructing someone on the placement of an injection, you’re asking them to use their imagination as to what the muscles look like. With this, there’s no room for imagination – they can actually see it. What’s more, I don’t have to be standing over them; they can practice on their own,” said DeSiena.

DeSiena has even used Realityworks’ RealCare Baby infant simulators to bring realism to simulations of a postpartum visiting nurse in a home situation. This wireless baby cries when it needs to be fed, burped, rocked or changed and coos when its needs are met, which DeSiena found helped her students develop empathy towards their simulated patients.

“I liked the fact that I could program RealCare Baby on my computer and during the simulation, when the baby would cry or burp, students would have to watch the mother take care of the baby’s unexpected needs,” said DeSiena. “This was extremely real and it was random – students had to react in real time, to a real-life situation.”

DeSiena sometimes spends seven days a week setting up, cleaning up and re-creating new simulations. According to DeSiena, that preparation is what makes the experience real for her students – and it’s why she’s always on the lookout for learning aids and simulators that will help her create real-life scenarios in which her students can think critically and practice key skills.

“Simulations let students put theory into practice; they can make mistakes and learn in a safe environment,” said DeSiena. “But when we use a lot of fake or pretend in simulation, it decreases the fidelity of the experience. The more products that we can incorporate that help promote reality, whether in the learning lab or the simulation lab, the more realistic the experience is for the students.”