



On the Bright Side: Standardized Patient Program Perseveres Throughout Pandemic

July 28, 2020 | Kara Petrosky

Standardized Patient Simulation continues to innovate and offer students campuswide a variety of communication-based and physical exam simulations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Standardized Patient (SP) simulation is an important modality for student learning and assessment throughout the University of Maryland, Baltimore. A standardized patient (SP) is a highly trained individual who can simulate a patient and provide the learner the experience of practicing various clinical scenarios prior to being in a clinical role. With the sudden implementation of virtual learning brought on by the pandemic, the University of Maryland Schools of Medicine (UMSON) and Nursing's Standardized Patient Program (SPP), directed by Nancy Culpepper, worked with various faculty members to ensure that virtual SP learning could still be an effective method of learning and assessment. After nearly five months of remote SP simulation, the department continues to create numerous positive virtual experiences for students, faculty, and standardized patients.



The SPP has positively impacted students campuswide, including those in UMSON, UMSOM, Pharmacy (UMSOP), and Social Work (UMSSW). The virtual SP scenarios in which the students have participated have varied as greatly as do the professions. The students in UMSOM and UMSOP participated in end-of-semester objective structured clinical exams (OSCEs) just as they would have in person. Each UMSOM and UMSOP student met with three different SPs and performed each encounter using the WebEx platform. UMSON and UMSSW students have had the opportunity to participate in simulations involving difficult conversations, including end-of-life conversations with Doctor of Nursing Practice students and behavior modification conversations with simulated social work clients.

As survey data continues to be collected, we would be remiss if we didn't share the anecdotal successes of virtual SP simulation. "I couldn't believe how real the scenario felt. In the moment, I was completing a telemedicine visit with a concerned patient and I was happy to provide some comfort to them," a fourth-year medical student said. Additionally, a DNP student in the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner specialty said, "I am glad to have these opportunities to practice with SPs. I know that the first time I have to tell a mother that her child has taken a turn for the worse, I will feel more confident in doing so with the practice I received here today. I can't thank you enough for that."

As UMB moves toward recovery, the SPP is working closely with faculty, the IT and facilities teams, and other consultants to safely implement critical in-person SP simulations under the guidance of University administration while continuing virtual SP simulation as appropriate. We are happy to play our part in providing SP simulation during this uncertain time.

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