

## Collaboration Saves Lives

How Team Building Activities Strengthen the Emergency Department

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*(Staff at Clement J Zablocki VA Medical Center participate in team simulation training. Left to right: Chelsea Beaty, Mary Degenhardt, Jean Borck, Andrea Sharbutt, Celso Benitez. VA courtesy photo.)*

The Emergency Department (ED) plays a critical role in responding to medical emergencies, including cardiac arrests. Recognizing the importance of teamwork and effective communication in such situations, the Clement J Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin has embraced team building activities through in-situ medical team emergency (MTE) drills. Led by dedicated simulation education specialists and supported by the ED leadership, these drills have significantly enhanced staff readiness, confidence and patient outcomes.

Cardiac arrests affect over 600,000 individuals in the United States yearly, and the hospital survival to discharge rate for cardiac arrest patients is currently at 25% based on findings by the Joint Commission (Dudzik, Heard, Griffen, et al., 2019). To improve these outcomes, it is crucial to continuously update guidelines and reevaluate training programs, focusing on quality resuscitative care, compressions and team communication among health care providers (Circulation, Vol 142, no 16\_suppl\_2).

Traditionally, code training in the ED has been conducted with isolated health care team members, but the opportunity for growth presented itself when a partnership was formed between the ED leadership and the simulation program. In 2021, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, two MTE drills were successfully conducted. Building on this success, the program expanded in 2022 with nine drills,

and in 2023, drills are now provided on a quarterly basis. These achievements were made possible through the commitment of interprofessional EM champions, including EM physicians, managers and educators.



*Staff at Clement J Zablocki VA Medical Center participate in team simulation training. Left to right: Sarah Russell (EM resident), Adam Nicholas (RN), Olivia Taylor (RN), Ashlee Bailey (ED ICT), Brian Egan (RN), Catherine Andrade (RN). Photographer: Jean Borck.*

The MTE drills offer ED staff the opportunity to practice teamwork and build confidence in managing medical emergencies using the equipment available in their unit. The ED leadership takes pride in knowing that their staff is equipped to handle any medical emergency inside and outside the ED. By actively participating in debriefing sessions following the drills, the EM educator enables the team to reflect on their performance and identify areas for improvement, utilizing crisis resource management principles.

The outcomes from these drills have been remarkable. EM staff members have demonstrated effective closed-loop communication, clear role assignments by team leaders and utilization of available resources during medical emergencies. Post-drill feedback and debriefing sessions have proven beneficial, with staff expressing gratitude for the opportunity to practice real-life scenarios and develop essential skills. Participants have reported increased confidence, improved communication and a better understanding of code situations.



*Staff at Clement J Zablocki VA Medical Center participate in team simulation training. Left to right: Sarah Russell (EM resident), Jaclyn Clifford (ED HT), Brian Egan (RN), Heather Berken (RN), Kamille Fritz (RN). Photographer: Jean Borck*

Regular in-situ simulation team training during codes, basic life support and allocated drills have shown to elevate unit success in identifying compromised patients and improving cardiac arrest survival rates (Circulation, Vol 142, no 16\_suppl\_2). The dedication of EM leadership and staff within the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center has been instrumental in implementing and sustaining these initiatives.

As the MTE drills continue to provide EM staff with frequent exposure to realistic scenarios, their confidence will grow, ultimately leading to improved patient outcomes. The commitment to team building activities and ongoing training in the ED showcases the dedication of the ED leadership in fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.