

Director's Corner: Making a National Impact on Veteran Health Care Through Simulation

By Eric Bruns, MBA | SimLEARN Executive Director



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Making an impact often requires effort, dedication and the willingness to take risks and face challenges. I am proud of the strides that those working within the Simulation Learning, Evaluation, Assessment and Research Network (SimLEARN) take toward impacting and improving how our Veterans receive and experience care every day. SimLEARN is creating positive change for Veterans on a national scale using simulation. For example, through events, presentations, new products and simulation activities at the National SimLEARN Validation, Evaluation, and Testing (SimVET) Center

(NSC) and beyond, we are successfully realizing our vision of improving overall Veteran well-being through simulation-based innovation and technologies.

SimLEARN facilitated two three-day events at the NSC this past quarter. First, the Resuscitation Education and Innovation (REdI) portfolio hosted the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Resuscitation Symposium from February 14-16. The conference's theme was "Be the Change," and the event brought together VA leaders and frontline teams from across the Nation. From themed escape rooms to operating room (OR) simulations to group discussions on translating data in clinical care, the event was a catalyst for advancing Veteran resuscitation outcomes.

Additionally, the SimDesign Collaborative Conference was held from February 28 – March 2 at the NSC and hosted by SimLEARN's Assessment, Collaboration, and Outreach (ACO) portfolio. The conference brought together VA health care professionals from a diverse range of backgrounds to maximize how simulation efforts can impact Veteran care and VA employee training. Keynote speakers, simulation experts and panelists examined how simulation can be used to standardize best practices and improve quality of care. Attendees learned about using simulation in medical facility planning and construction and how they can design, implement and execute simulations at their VA facilities.

At the SimDesign Collaborative Conference, SimLEARN discussed digital twin technology, which involves creating a simulated virtual space that mirrors a physical environment. SimLEARN's simulation-based healthcare design testing (SbHDT) Program Manager, Devin Harrison, has been promoting digital twinning across the country, participating in a panel discussion at South by Southwest and presenting at the [American College of Healthcare Executives National Congress](#). Through physical simulations and collaboration with VA's facility management teams, SimLEARN aims to upgrade older facilities to support modern health care technology, even if they were not originally designed for it.

SimLEARN's impact on health care simulation was also felt at the 2023 International Meeting on Simulation in Healthcare (IMSH) in Orlando, Florida from January 21 – 25. Several SimLEARN leaders and

staff members attended and presented at IMSH about topics surrounding the work we're doing to transform Veteran care every day. Presenters and topics included:

- "Bridging the Gap of Electrocardiogram (ECG) Interpretation Skills Through Standardizing Modalities" by Michelle Regragui, Julie Lee, Sherri Boisvert, Vanessa Aycock, Mike Gray, Mike Doczekalski and Morton Pegues
- "Pre-and Post-construction Process Simulation" by Julie Lee, Sherri Boisvert, Vanessa Aycock, Devin Harrison and LeAnn Schlamb
- "Holoportation Technology" by Brian Stevenson and Mike Doczekalski
- "Poster Presentation: Utilizing Simulation Education and Workflows to Reduce C-Diff Infections" by Bonnie Haupt
- "Research Abstract Oral Presentation: Simulation Teaching and Learning" by Bonnie Haupt
- "Hot Topic: Reduce Clostridioides Difficile (C. Diff) Infections through Interprofessional Education and Workflow Simulation" by Bonnie Haupt
- "Hot Topic: Optimize System-wide Performance in a Newly Constructed Facility" by Bonnie Haupt

Also, we are looking forward to building upon our partnership with VHA Safe Patient Handling and Mobility (SPHM) to simulate patient care scenarios for using assistive devices to ensure that patients can be mobilized safely and that care providers avoid performing high-risk manual patient handling. This year, we hope to have SPHM equipment available at the NSC for staff to use in simulations. Simulations conducted at the NSC have been ideal for testing various patient handling scenarios in different environments. Since 2018, SPHM has held conferences for facility coordinators, therapists and perioperative professionals, as well as a virtual conference for mental health.

Additionally, SimLEARN looks forward to expanding our national impact with more events in the immediate future, which include the SimLEARN Innovation Center for Education (SLICE) and Simulation Showcase and an event launching the Simulation Validation, Evaluation, and Testing (SimVET) portfolio. Overall, the effects that our dedicated professionals are having on transforming Veteran care through simulation have been significant. I remain energized by the opportunities for people to discover how simulation can truly impact, not just Veteran care, but the future of VA health care as a whole.