

Incorporating Fun into Nursing Education

Escape Rooms Take Center Stage

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(Staff at Orlando VA participate in nursing float pool escape room. Left to Right: Jasmin Rodrigues, RN; Angie Sarmiento Narvaez, RN; Vanessa Lorenzo Rosario, RN; Olga Lopez Londono, NA; Ashley Waldo, RN; Steven Velazquez, RN; Maria Trujillo, NA. Photographer: Sara Parlier, BSN, RN)

Adding an element of fun and excitement to nursing education, escape rooms have emerged as an innovative approach at the Orlando VA Healthcare System, empowering staff to deepen their skills and enhance teamwork. The 2023 SimDesign Collaborative Conference, hosted by SimLEARN at the National SimVET Center in Orlando, Florida, offered an array of activities, from keynote speeches to breakout rooms and simulation scenarios. One standout addition to the conference was the introduction of escape rooms, which provided an engaging and alternative approach to learning. Staff members from the Orlando VA Healthcare System eagerly participated in various escape room scenarios, including an operating room, an inpatient room and a cybersecurity-themed challenge.

Inspired by their experience at the SimDesign Collaborative Conference, Angie Sarmiento, float pool RN and unit practice council chair, along with the support of Nurse Manager Candace McNulty, decided to develop their own escape room as part of an education plan for the Float Pool Wellness and Education Day. Escape rooms, recognized as a form of experiential learning, offer staff members a fun and interactive way to enhance their knowledge and skills. These scenarios introduce an element of gamification to intense situations, resulting in increased staff participation and engagement.

The Float Pool Escape Room not only focused on specific skills but also emphasized processes, safety and efficiency in delivering care. The goal was to foster team building and encourage staff members to rely on each other's areas of strength. Groups included registered nurses and nursing assistants, with various tasks and clues to unravel. Following the scenario, staff members participated in a debriefing session to reflect on their experiences, accompanied by a post-training survey. With a total of 26 participants divided into four groups, the results were overwhelmingly positive. Survey results revealed 96% of participants agreed that the escape room deepened their skills and helped develop new ones, while 100% of survey respondents expressed interest in incorporating escape rooms into future educational trainings. Oliva Chase, a float pool RN, shared her appreciation for her colleagues, stating, "everyone on the team had a valuable bit of knowledge or way of looking at things." She added, "the main thing I took away from the experience was appreciation for my coworkers and how everyone has different strengths. Everyone contributed in different ways and made it possible to succeed."