

Preparing for the Unexpected: Maternal Care Simulation Training at Southern Nevada VA Medical Center

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(Emergency department staff participate in simulation training on maternal care and childbirth, ensuring preparedness for unexpected emergencies. From left to right: Enrique Sanchez Miranda, ED ICT, Malee Fontanilla, MSN, Daniel Higdon, ED RN, Scott Linebaugh, ED RN, and Carissa Hernandez, MSN, Nursing Education)

In simulation, preparation for both expected and unexpected scenarios is crucial. VA has historically had limited involvement in maternal health, lacking even a birthing task trainer for staff skill development. Understanding that unexpected situations are inevitable, a collaborative effort was initiated between the Southern Nevada VA Medical Center (VAMC) and the Nellis Air Force Base (AFB) simulation center at the Mike O’Callahan Federal Hospital to bridge this gap. Nellis AFB, which routinely trains for childbirth using task trainers and a birthing manikin, joined forces with VA educators and simulation technicians to design a comprehensive training program.

VAMC staff should have a solid understanding of maternal care and childbirth, regardless of their daily exposure to pregnant or birthing patients. Emergencies related to pregnancy and childbirth can occur unexpectedly, even in settings where cases are infrequent. Being knowledgeable about maternal care equips health care professionals to respond effectively and swiftly to those emergencies, ensuring the safety and well-being of both parent and child. Additionally, understanding maternal health promotes a holistic approach to patient care, fostering empathy, inclusivity, and patient-centered practices. Integrating training such as this into medical center staff education through simulation is essential for maintaining high standards of care and improving patient outcomes.

The collaborative course in February 2024 involved multiple meetings to outline objectives and determine necessary task trainers for effective learning. The training session was held with five emergency department participants, two instructors, and Nellis AFB simulation technicians. Post-training feedback was positive, emphasizing the need for additional training will all VAMC staff to ensure competency and readiness for such scenarios. The success of this collaboration highlights the value of ongoing learning and the potential for future partnerships to enhance staff preparedness and skills.