

Take the Plunge! Nursing Graduates Dive into Simulation to Improve Veteran Care

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(Intensive Care Simulation Room at the National Simulation Center. Photograph provided by SimLEARN staff)

New graduate nurses often report feeling an overwhelming lack of confidence in making sound clinical decisions when caring for Veterans. They often make comments, such as, “*I have no experience because half of my education has been online.*” Due to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, many new graduates are entering the nursing profession with less-than-optimal hands-on experience. Simulation trainings serve as a bridge for new graduates to gain confidence while enhancing their skills.

In 2020, the South Texas RN Transition-to-Practice (RNTP) program advisory board determined there was a need to include simulation in the curriculum. The team jumped into action to develop a simulation program that coincided with core curricula for the year-long program. The South Texas Simulation Center collaborated with the RNTP program director and chief of nursing education to develop an assessment and training plan that would meet the needs of new nurse graduates. The plan moved the program from no simulation sessions to 34% of all training time in simulation.

The South Texas Simulation Center integrated high-fidelity simulation focused on complex patient care events. Each simulation was constructed to bring the educational focus to life and evaluate the residents' skills, knowledge, and attitudes while immersing them in the learning activity. The South Texas RNTP program's mission statement is to aid the new nurse residents in building professional competency and confidence. The chart below illustrates how each educational focus was translated into a simulation learning model to enhance a learners' confidence and skills.

Didactic	Simulation	Skill and Confidence Assessment
Planning a Culture of Safety	Cardiac Arrest: Laerdal High Fidelity	Team based competencies, problem solving technical expertise
Managing Patient Changing Condition	Sepsis: Laerdal High Fidelity	Problem solving, decision making, functional expertise
Patient Centered Care	Stroke: Human Patient Simulators in Simulated Clinical Environment	Decision making team-based competencies
Communication and Conflict	Disruptive Behavior: Human Patient Simulators	Interpersonal and communication

Eighteen nurse residents completed the simulation program to date. The feedback from new nurses has been overwhelmingly positive.

"I feel like, now, I am going to know how I will react...this will allow me to better serve the Veteran as a nurse," a resident said. 100% of new nurse residents have reported that the addition of simulation is the best part of their seminar day.

