

New Nutrition-Focused Physical Examination Simulation Rotation Offered at the James A. Haley VA Hospital and Clinics

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Registered Dietitians (RDs) at the James A. Haley VA Hospital and Clinics collaborated with the James A. Haley Advanced Simulation Center to offer a clinical rotation for dietetic interns new to conducting Nutrition-Focused Physical Examinations (NFPE). The goal of the rotation was to teach clinicians how to palpate muscle and fat as well as conduct a head-to-toe examination looking for potential micronutrient deficiencies. Simulation manikins do not reflect muscle or fat realistically, so to add fidelity and improve



Figure 1: Lauri Metzger placing an NGT for Simulation set up deflating IV bag to create Ascites

the palpation exercises, the following adjustments were made to manikins: adipose suit placed on one manikin; muscle was created using modeling clay, then covered by foam and dragon skin to replicate the tactile experience for muscle tone, subcutaneous fat and skin.

Additionally, images of lesions commonly found during an eye exam were taped to eyeglasses placed on the manikin. To simulate ascites and edema, intravenous (IV) bags and gel bags were placed under dragon skin for palpations that may indicate fluid accumulation. Six case scenarios were created at each simulation station. The intern reviewed the case scenario and then began the NFPE. At the end of the examination, the intern determined if there were any altered findings for muscle, fat, fluid status, hair, eyes, skin, oral cavity or fingernails and began the ruling in or ruling out process for malnutrition.

Overall, the simulation experience prepares new interns for what to expect at bedside before beginning their NFPE on actual patients. This preparation creates a safe learning experience that gradually allows students to

gain confidence. Staff RDs assisted with the creation of all scenarios, which provided an additional opportunity for learning and collaborating with the Sim lab. Clinical staff have reported that interns come to their rotations more prepared with increased knowledge on how to conduct a NFPE.