

Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

Standardized Patients in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Simulations: Taking Care of Our Actors

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the day-to-day experiences of Standardized Patients (SPs) in psychiatric mental health nursing. The integration of simulation in nursing education allows students to apply nursing skills in a safe and supportive environment. Currently, few studies explore the physical/ emotional demands of SPs. With expectations that SPs depict a realistic portrayal of mental illness, the concern is to address any psychological harm resulting from an accurate portrayal of mental illness.

Methods: After approval by the University Institutional Review Board, a qualitative research design was used to examine the experience of five SPs portraying clients with mental illness in the psychiatric mental health course of senior nursing students. Using interviews and art-work as data sources, the interpretive phenomenological perspective of Colaizzi (1978) guided inquiry and analysis.

Results: Four themes emerged: *Sparks something in me*, *Building on confidence*, *Stepping into the shoes of the educator*, and *Letting it get to me*. In the theme, "*Sparks something in me*" participants discovered their initiation into the acting role emanated from their personal life. For many participants, their original interest working as SPs proceeded from a long-held interest in acting. This initial investment in their role proceeded to the second theme, *Building on confidence*. *Building on confidence* became the platform for their roles as educators. The SPs emerged as educators as they became expert. They were increasingly participatory in actor training sessions and "refreshers"-often taking leadership roles and mentoring novice SPs. The final theme, *Letting it get to me*, was a departure in that SPs discovered the intensity of their roles and noted they had difficulty in "shaking-off" their roles.

Conclusion:

Due to reduced clinical availability, as a result of CO-VID 19, nursing educators have increasingly incorporated SPs in courses. Consequently, actors are stretched, often playing multiple roles. Creating accurate representations of clients with mental illness entail interactions that provide complex and authentic portrayals of clients with mental illness (Jarosinski & Webster, 2016). SPs are also used to highlight skills or concepts such as therapeutic communication, bias and stigma (Jack et al., 2014; Brown, 2015). In essence, SPs portray the reality of living with mental illness; for some SPs the intensity of these roles is exhausting-even intruding into their everyday lives.

As educators, it is up to us to "take care" of our actors; the greater actors immerse themselves in their roles, the greater the emotional toll (Webster & Jarosinski, 2017).

Recommendations include: incorporation of clear and specific protocols, targeted recruitment, training, debriefing after simulations, and progress meetings. Mentoring in the form of pairing novice actors with seasoned actors is one way of building a

supportive network among actors and responding to the needs of novice actors. SPs provide a critical role in imparting an accurate and authentic portrayal of a patient, especially when clinical opportunities are sparse. "Taking care of our actors" is not only critical, but, it is "who we are" as nurses.

Title:

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Keywords:

Authentic, Mentoring and Simulation

Abstract Summary:

We explored experiences of standardized patients in high-fidelity simulations in the psychiatric/mental-health course of senior nursing students. Using interviews/art as data, the phenomenological perspective of Colaizzi (1978) guided inquiry resulting in four themes. Standardized patients emerged as educators; yet, noted the intensity of the roles and difficulty "shaking-off" roles.

Late Breaking Reason:

Given the COVID-19 environment, high fidelity simulations are increasingly used to replace lost clinical sites. Actors, as standardized patients (SPs) have expanded their roles to include more disciplines and additional courses. As nursing educators, our role is also one of caring and vigilance as highlighted in this research.

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