

Updates to the INACSL Standards of Best Practice: The Debriefing Process

Learning Outcomes:

After this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the criteria and guidelines for the new Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice™ The Debriefing Process.
2. Apply the new and revised Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice™ to their simulation program/area of work or practice

Background

Debriefing is a key component of all simulation-based educational (SBE) activities and is an activity for which myriad approaches and models have been developed and implemented (Oriot & Alinier, 2018). To improve SBE practice in general, the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) provides the Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice, an evidence-based framework to guide simulation design, implementation, debriefing, evaluation, and research (INACSL Standards Committee et al., 2021). Originally published in 2011, periodic revisions to these standards are necessary as the use of simulation in healthcare and education expands and the debriefing process evolves.

Aim

This presentation aims to outline changes to the simulation debriefing standard as compared to when the standard was last published (INACSL Standards Committee et al., 2021).

Method

From 2019 to 2021, a group of international simulation educators and researchers representing multiple disciplines, simulation societies, and experts met to conduct a systematic review of the literature and evaluate if the simulation debriefing standard was current, relevant, and met the needs of the simulation community. This group identified several opportunities for revision and formulated the new standard. The Vice President of Research for INASCL oversaw an advisory panel who provided feedback and support as the revisions were completed. A Board of Directors approved the final iteration of the standard which was published in *Clinical Simulation in Nursing* in 2021.

Discussion

The revised Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice: The Debriefing Process™ features four rather than five criteria with numerous refined required elements (International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning Standards Committee [INACSL], 2016). Criterion 5 and its elements were primarily incorporated with Criterion 2. Another prominent change was the introduction of the term *debriefing process* rather than simply debriefing. A process denotes a series of steps or techniques taken to accomplish an end. The type or combination of techniques depends on the level or type of learner, desired learning, and/or evaluation outcomes of the simulation-based experience. The debriefing process incorporates feedback, debriefing, and/or guided reflection as distinct but integral

components for debriefing simulation-based experiences. The authors updated the language of the standard to be more inclusive and applicable to various simulation modalities as well as encompass a blended approach using different strategies or techniques of debriefing (INACSL Standards Committee et al., 2021).

Criterion 1: The debriefing process should be planned and incorporated into SBE activities in a manner that guides the learner(s) to achieve the desired learning outcome(s). The authors expanded the language in this criterion to account for variations in the debriefing process while staying congruent with the standard. The debriefing process should be preceded by pre-briefing and should be structured, learner-centered, and timely. The authors also added that the process should be adaptable allowing for modification in approaches. The authors recommend that the debriefing process may occur in multiple phases to allow deeper exploration of the learners' performance. Adaptability and a multiple-phased debriefing process are echoed in Criterion 4. The debriefing process should ensure resources are available to support content, provide clarification, and assist with critical reflection. An example of one such resource might be access to counselors to assist learners beyond the initial debriefing process and address emotional problems associated with crisis simulation.

Criterion 2: The debriefing process is constructed, designed, and/or facilitated by a person(s) or technology-enhanced system capable and/or competent in providing appropriate feedback, debriefing, and/or guided reflection. The term *system* was added to incorporate artificial intelligence or computer-aided guidance with debriefing. As simulation technology evolves, the debriefing process could be conducted by an individual, team of people, and/or technology-enhanced systems such as artificial intelligence in a variety of environments and settings. No longer is the debriefing process relegated to in-person, faculty-led sessions held in conference rooms immediately following the SBE activity. For example, the debriefing process could be conducted by a facilitator using a web-based conference platform several days after learners complete an asynchronous, virtual simulation activity. The authors also addressed the amount of time allocated to the debriefing process. The appropriate amount of time devoted to the debriefing process is multifactorial, including, but not limited to variables such as the objectives of the SBE, and the performance of the learner(s). The time allocation should not have a set relationship to the preceding activity. Group size during the debriefing process may vary depending upon the setting. All learners may actively participate in the scenario, while others may observe and still participate in the debrief. Learners may be in-person, remote via local classroom video, or participating in a virtual learning experience using a web-based conferencing platform, etc.

The debriefing process should provide an unbiased critique of performance with the intent to correct errors, promote understanding, facilitate comprehension, and promote insightfulness. When co-debriefing is conducted, the facilitator(s) and/or developer(s) of the technology-enhanced system should be skilled in evidence-based practices related to the debriefing process, knowledgeable, and familiar with the case or procedure and its objectives as well as the expected or desired performance of the learner(s).

Criterion 3: The debriefing process should be conducted in an environment with adequate facilities to allow for privacy, open discussion, trust, review, and confidentiality. It is important to note that the environment is unspecified to allow for variations in settings and approaches to debriefing. The environment or setting should allow for privacy and open discussion while preserving confidentiality and building trust. To build on the previous example, if a facilitator-led debriefing session is conducted on a web-based conference

platform, meeting IDs and passwords should be used to support a private and confidential environment, as well as adjust the conference settings to manage participants and lock the meeting. Additional steps to promote privacy might include acquiring consent from participants, especially if the debriefing session is recorded and the recording could be shared with non-participants or used for other purposes such as quality control or training.

The authors contend that support resources should be in place for learners in case of unexpected distress or outcome. The literature is teeming with the importance of providing psychological safety for learners especially when learners are contending with sensitive and potentially traumatizing content. The authors added a specifically required element in this criterion to promote and protect the psychological safety of learners. The debriefing process should guide learners towards comprehension and understanding to achieve desired objectives and outcomes. The debriefing process should be focused on the learner's behavior and allow for the observation and discussion of the learner's response and/or behavior to improve performance particularly when the learner is unaware of a deficit. The discussion must also allow for clarification of the frames or context that may not be known by the observer.

Criterion 4: The debriefing process should be based on theoretical frameworks and/or evidenced-based concepts and conducted using modalities appropriate to the complexity of the scenario, contexts, learner(s), time available, and the learning objectives. As mentioned, the debriefing process may occur in multiple phases to best facilitate analysis or critique of the team, system, or learner. The process should encourage learners to search for evidence-based solutions and foster learners' ability to apply/transfer the knowledge, skills, and attitudes obtained during SBE activities to actual clinical settings. The authors assert that each learner's perspective is valid and may not be fully understood without exploration. Lists of debriefing models/structures and frameworks to facilitate the debriefing process were included as resources. The authors note these resources are relevant to what was available at the time of this revision and the lists are not exhaustive.

Implications for Practice

The authors hope this revision to the Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice: The Debriefing Process™ provides a framework from which educators and simulationists may design, implement, evaluate, and conduct research surrounding the debriefing process. The debriefing process will continue to evolve as the science of SBE advances. Through thoughtful preparation, focus on best practices as identified in the literature, and skilled facilitation, learners will derive the most benefit from the debriefing process.

Keywords: debriefing; debriefing process; feedback; guided reflection; simulation-based experience

References

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