

Making it SIMPLE: Simulation in Multiple interProfessional Learning Environments

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Background: The SIMPLE program was developed to provide innovative interprofessional clinical simulation training for students from a range of disciplines and universities. The program was developed through a partnership between Melbourne Health and the University of Melbourne and was made possible through a Health Workforce Australia (HWA) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) grant.

Methods: Four training modules were developed and implemented throughout the academic year. They were designed to create a supportive interactive interprofessional learning environment to assist entry level students develop skills in patient centred teamwork and collaborative decision making. Actors and a simulated mannequin played the roles of standardised patients. The program was evaluated formally through participant surveys and audit data. Outcomes were analysed using basic descriptive statistics. Baseline and follow-up surveys were assessed using either Chi-2 or Fisher's exact tests. Qualitative data was collated into core themes using the principles of grounded theory.

Results: Two hundred and six students from 9 disciplines participated in the program. Preliminary data showed improved self-ratings in teamwork and communication as well as understanding the roles of other disciplines after the training. The most powerful learning experiences reported by students' were: understanding team roles and perspectives; interprofessional collaboration; and, team decision making.

Discussion: The SIMPLE program offered students' invaluable opportunities to develop and consolidate team work and communication skills. There was some benefit in providing the program to students while they were on clinical placement. Firstly, it provided a challenging and safe learning environment for them to extend their skills. Secondly, it meant that they could apply what they had learnt from the program throughout the rest of their placement. This positive outcome is consistent with the literature on the role of clinical simulation training in building team capacity in the complex health service environment.