Introduction

The University of Applied Sciences, School of Health Sciences in Lausanne, Switzerland (HECVSanté) offers four Bachelor programs in nursing, physiotherapy, radiology technology and midwifery.

Our institution has adopted a competence-based approach to teaching and preparing students for professional life. In order to develop professional competences, we alternate clinical experience with teaching and training at our school. One of our main educational principles focuses on the acquisition of reflective practice hence promoting and supporting autonomy in a perspective of life-long learning.

Why?

The use of simulation during the period of teaching at school is an effective and efficient way to promote acquisition of professional skills such as psycho-motor, physical and communication skills,
Low to middle-fidelity manikins are commonly used, while the use of high-fidelity simulators is about to be integrated in the nursing and midwifery program. Phantoms are also used in the radiologic technology Department in order to teach and train the radio-diagnostic part of the profession.

For two years now, our main focus of development is our own simulated/standardized patients (SP) program, that also involves our SPs in hybrid simulations. SPs are collaborating in teaching and training all of our students during the three year Bachelor programs. A multi-source approach for feedback including oral and written SPs' feedback is a key component for enhancing reflective practice among students during debriefing. Support offered to patients suffering from bereavement, administration of a radio-oncologic treatment, evaluation of a neurologic situation, administration of an aerosol treatment for asthmatic patients, post-partum hemorrhage are among several examples developed for SPs' teaching activities. Finally, SPs are engaged in Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) assessing the students' clinical skills and competences at different levels of their health care education. We are very proud to see our SP program become a cornerstone in our curricular development.

We have piloted with success the use of SP methodology for teaching and training interprofessional collaboration among our third-year students in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine and the University Hospital of Lausanne. but also clinical reasoning, and patient-health provider relationship. Simulation allows us to develop sound clinical skills in a holistic patient-approach using safe, controlled, standardized and tailored clinical situations.
Our simulation activities are developed by a team of educational experts in simulation, who are all member of our Unit of Educational Innovation. Aware of the fact that the success of simulation use is strongly related to the level of the Faculty’s competences to teach and evaluate in this specific context, we decided to develop a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Simulation. This modular course, addressing all allied health professionals and faculty, is a first in Switzerland and in the French speaking countries of Europe. It will be offered at the beginning of 2012.

All of our faculties use different simulation tools and methods but aim for consistent and efficient curriculum integration of simulation. Considering our students particular professionalization needs, specific educational strategies, such as “professional didactics”, are adopted in order to develop focused emblematic simulation scenarios for teaching and assessment.
Research

As evidenced-based practice for teaching is a key component for integration of simulation in our curricula, our institution promotes and supports the development of research in the field of simulation. Our research projects focus on different topics such as:

- The translation and validation of tools for the evaluation of simulation activities
- Development of conceptual frameworks for simulation teaching
- For SP methodology:
  - The evaluation of different types of feedback delivered during SPs teaching activities on the development of clinical skills
  - The evaluation of the SPs’ collaboration for interprofessional education
  - The exploration of the SPs’ roles and responsibilities collaborating in healthcare contexts
  - The development of tools for the evaluation of the quality of SPs’ feedback
  - The exploration of human factors influencing the quality SPs’ feedback.

Conclusion

Our institution is also involved in promotion of simulation and its educational strategies on a national and international level. We play an active role in organizations such as INACSL, SESAM and ASPE. We organize in 2012 the 3rd Swiss Conference on Standardized Patients and Simulation.

We firmly believe that, over time, simulation in health education will play a predominant role in improving quality of care though better prepared health professionals. We actively seek collaboration to better structure overall simulation strategies and to measure the expected outcomes.
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