

The use of virtual patients in Motivational Interviewing skill acquisition through self-preparation for team-based learning

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Short Description

There is a growing trend towards online learning and using virtual patients in educating health professionals in various clinical skills, particularly during this pandemic era. Online learning with virtual patients (VPs) allow learners to engage with simulated patients, providing a safe environment in which to learn about methods and practice their skills followed by sharing experiences and learnings with peers as part of team-based learning. There are various approaches to the development of and engagement with VPs, whether part of an undergraduate or post graduate curriculum or continuing professional development. This workshop provides the opportunity for participants to engage with a pilot version of a virtual patient conversation tool for Motivational Interviewing (MI), provide input into the ongoing development of the VP, and explore the use and value of virtual patients in teaching MI and other clinical skills to health professionals.

Learning Outcome

Understand the use and value of virtual patients in teaching MI and other clinical skills to health professionals or health students as part of team-based learning.

Full Description

Motivational Interviewing is a key skill for supporting behavioural change during client consultations and is of crucial importance across all health professions to address the growing burden of chronic conditions. A team in Australia are currently working on the development of an MI virtual patient conversation tool to provide an accessible, cost effective, cross-disciplinary resource that supports the development and maintenance of MI competence beyond basic training levels. This workshop will highlight the use and value of virtual patients in health professional education, explore participants' views of the features, functionality and usability of a virtual patient in the context of education in Motivational Interviewing as part of team-based learning, and explore ideas for using VPs in their work.

Method and interactive activities:

1. Presentation (*15 mins*) on virtual patients (VPs) in health professional education, including:

- Key disciplines in which VPs are used
- The types of skills VPs are used for
- Using VPs to teach counselling skills – benefits and issues
- Using VPs to teach Motivational Interviewing – current approaches and technologies
- The development process leading up to the current MI Trainer virtual patient

2. Demonstration of the virtual patient system (*10 mins*) involving:

- A conversation with the pilot VP
- Creating new conversations with the editing tools

3. Group discussion (*20 mins*) to explore:

- The conversation flow
- VP technology: text selection versus voice recognition
- Provision of formative feedback within the conversation
- VP interface (text/avatar/actors)
- Creation tools
- Enablers and barriers to using VPs (compared to traditional training) in a team-based learning environment
- How participants from different disciplines could incorporate VPs into their work

4. Summary and wrap-up (*5 minutes*)