

# SIMULATED PATIENTS ENHANCE DISCHARGE PROCESSES FOR PATIENTS WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES

By Sharon Maclean, Fiona Geddes, Michelle Kelly and Phillip Della

Today's healthcare environment presents unique challenges for nurses who are more frequently caring for patients with multiple acuities and complex care issues (Elfrink et al. 2012).

As hospital lengths of stay are reduced and patients are organised to return home with the expectation of managing more complex issues, preparing patients and their families for discharge becomes more challenging. Patients with chronic health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes typically have poorer health outcomes post discharge and higher readmission rates (Peter et al. 2015). Preparing nurses to perform safe, complex patient discharge will likely lead to improved patient confidence in self-management, and potentially better outcomes.

Advances in technology to support clinical and communication practices provides nurses with both opportunities and obstacles to optimally perform a range of tasks, including assisting patients to prepare for their transition home. Importantly, the role and environment in which nurses operate necessitates them developing comprehensive communication skills and applying a high level of critical thinking and clinical judgment (Lasater, 2007). While patient discharge is an everyday occurrence, teaching student nurses the importance of ensuring patients' understanding of complex healthcare instructions is a challenging task.

Providing the opportunity for nursing students to develop discharge communication skills is often limited to the clinical setting they are allocated during placements. Unfortunately, many nursing students



approach discharge communication with patients apprehensively due to a perceived lack of exposure during clinical placements or their theoretical coursework. Modeling of the approach to patient discharge is most often attained during clinical placements and variable as students observe the practices of registered nurses.

RESEARCH OUTCOMES WILL BE USED TO IMPROVE CURRENT DISCHARGE TEACHING PRACTICES ACROSS THE BACHELOR OF NURSING PROGRAM WITH THE GOAL OF BETTER PREPARING GRADUATE NURSES TO ASSIST PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS, SUCH AS TYPE 2 DIABETES, ACROSS TRANSITIONS OF CARE.

## Significance of the project

The research is a mixed method, quasi-experimental control group design using simulation as an educational intervention. Undergraduate nursing students at Curtin University, Western

Australia form the sample population. Three simulation scenarios, students were designed to increase students' appreciation of the complex discharge needs of a type 2 diabetic patient and develop their communication competence. Simulated patients are employed to role-play patients with type 2 diabetes and case studies from actual patient notes are used to realistically frame the scenarios. Each student-patient dyad is video-recorded for analytic and reflective feedback purposes. On completion of the intervention students are invited to watch their discharge video and complete a questionnaire on their simulation experience before participating in a group debriefing. The quality of the discharge is measured from three perspectives: the student, simulated patient, and researcher; focusing on the informational and interactional strategies utilised.

The unique design of the research project allows students to both individually reflect on and critique their own performance; and receive direct feedback from simulated patients and facilitators to improve their communication and discharge skills. Research outcomes will be used to improve current discharge teaching practices across the bachelor of nursing program with the goal of better preparing graduate nurses to assist patients with chronic health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, across transitions of care.

**Sharon Maclean is a PhD Candidate; Dr Fiona Geddes is in Research; Dr Michelle Kelly is Associate Professor and Professor Phillip Della is Head of School. All are located at Curtin University**



## References

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