Standardized Patient Program

What is a Standardized Patient?
Standardized patients (SPs) are individuals carefully trained to portray common health or illness conditions, communication or ethical dilemmas that occur in practice environments. Encounters with standardized patients give health professional students the opportunity to learn and practice effective communication, assessment and intervention techniques with real people without taxing actual patients. SPs provide realistic clinical experiences for the development of interpersonal and clinical skills.

Example areas of study and testing include:

- Health Assessment and Interviewing Skills
- Patient Education Strategies
- Communication and Ethical Dilemma Skills
- Team Collaboration Skills
- Psychotherapeutic Skills

What does a Standardized Patient do?
SPs study a case scenario and are scripted to give specific responses, behaviors and skills necessary for realistic, standardized portrayals. Training may involve a video review of previous SP-student encounters and generally involve coaching and/or role-play. In most cases the SP (unlike a real patient) is asked to step out of a role at the end of an encounter and provide the student with valuable, objective verbal and written feedback. In testing situations, SPs are educated to complete formal evaluations of each student based on a specific set of skills being assessed. These evaluations may be factored into the student’s grade for a particular activity or be used to coach the student to a higher level of performance.
History of Standardized Patients

Why use Standardized Patients?
The purpose of using SPs is to assist in the education and evaluation of healthcare students, in a controlled setting.

Where do SP experiences take place?
Oregon Health and Science University uses a state-of-the-art digital recording system designed by Education Management Solutions (EMS) through which all SP encounters are recorded. Students, faculty, and SPs are able to observe their patient encounters at a later date as a form of self-evaluation. Students and SPs are digitally video-audio taped in patient examination rooms each fully equipped with the necessary assessment equipment as well as pan/zoom/tilt cameras and microphones. There is a computer in every exam room on which the SP completes the case checklist using EMS’ performance evaluation software application.

DID YOU KNOW?
Our SPs come from all walks of life and are between 12-90 years of age. Many have backgrounds in education, social work, or some medical profession.

Members of the faculty are also present during the SP sessions, observing the digitally video taped encounters from computer monitors in the lab or their desktop. They then offer feedback to the students during follow-up discussions. This is all completed within the controlled and safe environment of our center. As a result, students gain confidence and a level of comfort with SPs before working with real patients. Errors made or difficulties encountered with SPs can be corrected or improved prior to the students working with real patients.
History of Standardized Patients

Who designs the cases?

Faculty develop all of the patient cases and skills checklists. They also participate in the training of the standardized patients, along with the staff, to ensure an accurate and realistic portrayal. There is a sharing of SP cases with other standardized patient programs throughout the nation.

About the Center
The clinical skills center is currently being used for educational research projects that involve testing innovative curriculum on the clinical skills of learners. It is also serving as a laboratory for studies using standardized patients to assess clinicians in practice in rural Oregon by allowing for robust testing of case design and assessment for clinical research purposes.

Why use SPs for assessing students’ clinical skills?
By using SP clinical encounters, we are able to reliably assess the students’ interviewing, health assessment and communication skills. Once all of the evaluation checklists are scored, the faculty is able to compare each student’s performance to his/her fellow classmates, and to determine where the curriculum needs to be improved, particularly if many students did not perform well in specific areas. Also, there is the matter of equity in the SP assessment. For instance, all of the third-year medical students taking an examination in our center will see the same “patients”. This is not possible in a real clinical setting. Using standardized patient examinations is also an excellent method with which to evaluate curriculum and promote faculty development.
Background Information

The challenge
The Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) conducts training, testing, and evaluation of clinical skills in its Clinical Assessment and Learning Center (CALC) using standardized patients and high fidelity human simulators.

Prior to the opening of the CALC in 2007, OHSU used a manual process for holding student examinations and evaluations. It faced a big challenge – to improve the efficiency of its student training and evaluation program.

To solve these issues, OHSU decided that it needed an automated, high-tech method of training, evaluating, and grading students on their clinical skills. They turned to Education Management Solutions (EMS) for help.

The solution
In May of 2007, OHSU installed EMS’ Arcadia, a solution that integrated hardware and digital media, in 12 exam rooms. This Web-based system, which took only three weeks to install, automates and manages the complete clinical skills training and examination process. It digitally records student test performances, indexes the video files, and provides automatic scoring, reporting, and development of quantifiable performance measurements.

EMS’ Arcadia solution is now available in 12 exam rooms and 1 simulation room at OHSU, and allows anyone with on-campus Web access to view the content. This means schools can stream live video into classrooms for teaching. It also allows medical school faculty to review student-training videos securely and remotely.

Each clinical exam room has wall-mounted cameras and a microphone to record the training encounter between the student and standardized patient. Live or recorded video can be viewed both in the center observation room, or in various offices in the center and on campus.
Background Information

The solution (cont.)

The most recent EMS installation is the integration of its Total Sim™ solution with OHSU's high-fidelity human simulators. Total Sim™ allows for group assessment and student debriefing by faculty. The inclusion of human simulation into the curriculum gives students the benefit of honing their skills and decision-making abilities before working with real patients.

EMS is proud to partner with OHSU in its goal to facilitate interactive teaching through innovative educational tools, improve clinical knowledge through practice, build confidence and enhance individual and team performance, provide emergency management training in life support, and provide the opportunity to experience clinical scenarios before being confronted by similar situations in daily practice.

The director of the Center works with course directors to provide course-specific clinical skills development activities. Students can also make appointments with the director to schedule sessions to develop, maintain, or remediate clinical skills.

Standardized Patients (SP) are lay persons trained to simulate, in a consistent, standardized manner, a patient in a medical situation. SPs are used by OHSU School of Medicine to train and evaluate students in the clinical skills of interviewing and examining patients. SPs learn a case, based on a real patient other than themselves, and are interviewed and examined by students as though they were that person in the doctor’s office or clinic, giving that patient’s history, and simulating their physical signs, such as pain or difficulty walking.

How is this different from acting?
This work has nothing to do with finding dramatic moments or playing to an audience. It has everything to do with disciplining yourself within the needs of the case and exam. It may be appropriate for you to appear anxious, irritable, or confused during an interview if that is part of the training scenario. The ability to improvise is very helpful.
Background Information

Assessment
The Clinical Skills Center has developed a collection of clinical cases that utilize standardized patients to assess OHSU students in taking

- a history
- performing a physical exam
- communicating with the patient
- determining a differential diagnosis
- developing a treatment plan.

A major area of interest is the patient and health professional relationship with detailed feedback on the adequacy of these skills. This approach to assessment can be tailored to match the needs of other professionals.

Teaching
Activities concentrate on the use of standardized patients and video technology to teach the following skills

- basic interviewing
- history examination
- physical taking
- clinical decision making

Skills are taught at a variety of levels—from first-year medical student to senior resident.