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Featured Article

# The Prebriefing Concept: A Delphi Study of CHSE Experts

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## KEYWORDS

prebriefing;  
briefing;  
planning;  
simulation educator;  
facilitating;  
simulation preparation;  
simulation learning;  
Delphi;  
CHSE

## Abstract

**Background:** Over the past 10 years, simulation-based learning (SBL) has developed as a viable strategy to prepare students for clinical reasoning; however, very little is known about the specific components of the SBL experience and how they affect student learning. Currently, there is a gap in the simulation literature regarding prebriefing and the best strategies for preparing students for SBL.

**Method:** A three round modified electronic Delphi design was used to seek consensus from simulation experts about the prebriefing component of SBL. Initial qualitative responses of round one led to the creation of quantitative prebriefing item statements for consideration in rounds two and three. Expert panel members used a Likert scale to indicate agreement with each prebriefing statement. A 70% level of consensus was set as the benchmark.

**Results:** An expert panel of Certified Healthcare Simulation Educators reached consensus (>70%) on 83 statements about prebriefing. Findings suggest that prebriefing is an important three-phase process of SBL composed of planning, briefing, and facilitating.

**Conclusions:** The panel participants agreed that the simulation educator plays a vital role in preparing simulation participants for a successful SBL experience; however, further clarification of the prebriefing terminology is necessary. Findings of this study may be used to develop guidelines for simulation educators, administrators, and SBL learners to prepare for a successful SBL experience.

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Simulation-based learning (SBL) has evolved as a pedagogy to prepare learners for the complexities and clinical judgment decisions of clinical practice (Jeffries, 2012). Driven by the release of the national longitudinal simulation study from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, nurse educators face the challenge of

determining the best strategies for incorporating SBL into their nursing curriculum (Hayden, Smiley, Alexander, Kardong-Edgren, & Jeffries, 2014). SBL has developed over the past 20 years as a viable strategy to prepare students for clinical reasoning; however, very little is known about the specific components of SBL and how they affect student learning. Although debriefing has been widely studied and noted as an essential component of SBL (Dieckmann et al., 2011; Dreifuerst, 2009; National

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League for Nursing, 2015), little empirical evidence has been noted about the prebriefing component of SBL (McDermott, 2015; Page-Cuttrara, 2013).

### Key Points

- Prebriefing is vital to simulation success and may enhance debriefing and reflection.
- Amount, type, and complexity of prebriefing will depend on the learner characteristics, the purpose of the simulation-based learning, and the learning objectives.
- The simulation facilitator role incorporates three phases: (a) planning, (b) briefing, and (c) facilitating.

## Background

During the prebriefing period, students are oriented to the simulation learning environment and may complete activities to prepare them for the SBL experience. An examination of the simulation literature revealed the use of multiple methods for prebriefing, but no research specifically examined the methods or components of prebriefing (McDermott, 2015; Page-Cuttrara, 2013). In addition, no clear guidelines for how to prepare students for SBL were noted.

In 2013, the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) released the *Standards of Best Practice for Simulation*<sup>SM</sup> in an attempt to provide consistency and standardization of language when using simulation as a teaching methodology. According to these standards, prebriefing was defined as:

An information session held prior to the start of a simulation activity and in which instructions or preparatory information is given to participants. The purpose of the prebriefing is to set the stage for a scenario and assist participants in achieving scenario objectives. Suggested activities in a prebriefing include an orientation to the equipment, environment, manikin, roles, time allotment, objectives, and patient situation. (Meakim et al., 2013; p. s5).

Although prebriefing was defined, gaps remained in the literature regarding the consistency of prebriefing terminology and the best practices related to preparing students for SBL (Dieckmann et al., 2011; Groom, Henderson, & Sittner, 2014; McDermott, 2015; Page-Cuttrara, 2013). With the release of a new INACSL Standard<sup>TM</sup>: Simulation Design in June 2015 (Meakim, Fey, Chmil, Mariani, & Alinier, 2015), the term: “prebriefing” was eliminated and referred to as two separate criteria: criterion 7, briefing and criterion 10, participant preparation. The briefing component of the Simulation Design Standard included activities that established respect, provided expectations, and explained the fiction contract, whereas

criterion 10 discussed preparation activities for the participants of the SBL (Meakim et al., 2015).

Immediately before data collection for this Delphi study, an article by Rudolph, Raemer, and Simon (2014) was published about the role of presimulation briefing to SBL. The authors, using input from a literature review and from their own 20-year experience of conducting presimulation briefings before SBL, presented readers with practices for presimulation briefing (Rudolph et al., 2014). The authors discussed clarification of objectives and expectations, establishing a fiction contract, attending to logistical details of the SBL, and conveying respect for learners as essential practices in presimulation learning (Rudolph et al., 2014). In addition, they presented guidelines for establishing an engaging learning environment for the simulation educator in the article appendix.

In July 2015, two concept analyses of prebriefing were published (Chamberlain, 2015; Page-Cuttrara, 2015). Both these analyses noted the lack of consistency in prebriefing terminology and the lack of prebriefing research. When examining the use of the concept, Chamberlain (2015) noted that prebriefing involved orientation or engagement activities that occur before the SBL; however, Page-Cuttrara (2015) provided three phrases of prebriefing: “considering the situation, perceiving meaning, and anticipating a plan” as part of her characteristics of prebriefing.

The inconsistent terminology and lack of empirical evidence leaves simulation educators with little guidance about how to best prepare participants for SBL. Developing strategies for prebriefing may help simulation educators foster the development of clinical reasoning of participants in a simulated patient scenario. The purpose of this study was to seek consensus from simulation experts about the prebriefing component of simulation learning. The specific aims of this Delphi study were to (a) determine expert simulation educators’ perspectives of the prebriefing role to SBL and (b) develop guidelines for simulation educators in preparing participants for simulation learning.

## Method

This study used a modified electronic Delphi approach through three rounds of survey. The Delphi method is useful for soliciting group information and opinions from a panel of experts (Keeney, Hasson, & McKenna, 2011). According to Keeney et al. (2011), a lack of universal guidelines for conducting a Delphi study suggests that Delphi studies are open to interpretation of the researcher. For this reason, an extensive literature review of nursing research using the Delphi method was completed to develop a detailed study protocol according to recommendations from the literature with regard to: sample size and selection, rounds of inquiry, and setting a level of consensus (McDermott, 2015). Figure 1 provides a diagram of the

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