



ELSEVIER

Featured Article

# Confederates in Health Care Simulations: Not as Simple as It Seems

Debra Nestel, PhD<sup>a,\*</sup>, Bonnie L. Mobley, RN<sup>b</sup>, Elizabeth A. Hunt, MD, MPH, PhD<sup>c</sup>,  
Walter J. Eppich, MD, MEd<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Professor, School of Rural Health, HealthPEER, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University, Churchill, Victoria 3842, Australia

<sup>b</sup>Lecturer, Medical Education, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL, 60611, USA

<sup>c</sup>Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pediatrics, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, 21205, USA

<sup>d</sup>Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Medical Education, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL, 60611, USA

## KEYWORDS

confederate;  
simulated health care  
professional;  
embedded actor;  
scenario design;  
immersive simulations;  
simulated patient

**Abstract:** Confederates often enrich immersive health care simulations. In this commentary, we raise issues for consideration when working with confederates. We define the term “confederate,” describe their purpose, scope of practice, commonly encountered challenges for participants and confederates, and make recommendations for practice. We posit that Simulated (Standardized) Patient methodology offers valuable insights to working with confederates. A systematic approach to training for role portrayal drawn from Simulated (Standardized) Patient methodology is likely to improve confederate portrayal. Although the inclusion of confederates in simulations might seem simple enough, there are many considerations to ensure educational or research goals are achieved and confederates unharmed.

## Cite this article:

Nestel, D., Mobley, B. L., Hunt, E. A., & Eppich, W. J. (2014, December). Confederates in health care simulations: Not as simple as it seems. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 10(12), 611-616. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2014.09.007>.

© 2014 International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Immersive health care simulations are often enriched by the role of “confederates.” In this commentary, we raise issues for consideration when working with confederates that are based on our experiences of immersive simulations in health professions education across continents and over many years. We have each had experiences of confederates

being inadequately prepared or feeling unsafe. In writing this commentary, we hope to encourage reflection on contemporary practices of confederates. There is surprisingly little published research on confederates given their centrality to many simulation practices. Even the most comprehensive books on health care simulation make little reference to confederates. A recent and notable exception to understanding the work of confederates is by Sanko,

\* Corresponding author: [debra.nestel@monash.edu](mailto:debra.nestel@monash.edu) (D. Nestel).

Shekhter, Kyle, Di Benedetto, and Birnbach (2013) who draw on performing art theories to achieve effective involvement.

We start by defining the term, “confederate” and then describe their purposes and practices in simulations. Drawing on our experiences and those of our professional community, we articulate commonly encountered challenges for confederates and make recommendations for managing these challenges drawing on Simulated (Standardized) Patient (SP) methodology. We use examples from different health care professional disciplines because of the interprofessional nature of many confederate-based simulations. We offer directions for research to improve confederates’ important contributions to health care simulations. Throughout the article, we use the term “participant” to describe any type and level of learner.

### Key Points

- The role of confederates in immersive simulations is important for many reasons but is often oversimplified with unintended consequences for confederates and learners.
- Careful scenario design is important to quality assure optimal contributions from confederates in immersive simulations.
- Systematic approaches to training simulated (standardized) patients can inform the preparation of confederates for their portrayal in immersive simulations.

### The Discourse of Confederates

For health care simulation, definitions of confederate include, “an individual other than the patient who is scripted in a simulation to provide realism, additional challenges, or additional information for the participant” (IERC & AHC Simulation Center University of Minnesota); “experienced healthcare professionals who act as team members during a simulation activity” (McMaster University); or “a person assigned a role in a simulation encounter to help guide the scenario. The guidance may be influential as positive, negative, or neutral or as a distracter, depending on the objective(s), the level of the participants and the scenario. Although the embedded actor’s role is part of the situation, the underlying purpose of the embedded actor is not identified to the participants in the scenario or simulation” (The INACSL Board of Directors, 2011).

In health care simulations, the origin of the term is uncertain but likely to derive from the role of “plants” in experimental psychology (Asch, 1955; Milgram, 1961). For some individuals, the term has negative connotations, particularly in the United States with respect to the images and implications evoked by “Confederate” since the U.S. Civil War. However, the lower case and capitalization of the first letter changes the meaning. Simulation is based

on shared meanings of symbols, and the Confederate States of America’s symbols remain controversial as symbols of slavery and racial segregation. Despite this discord, the term confederate is used internationally although not universally in health care simulation. Dictionary definitions include reference to both “accomplice” and “citizen” reflecting the different values attributed to the word. Alternative terms include simulated health care professional, simulated relative, and embedded actor. These terms may have emerged in response to the discord or simply as precise descriptors of the role. However, for the purposes of this commentary, we maintain the use of confederate.

### Practices of Confederates

Confederates usually play the role of a health or social care professional or a patient’s relative and are often “alone” in the scenario. That is, they are immersed in the scenario as an agent of the simulation educator or researcher as opposed to one of the participant group. They may also play the role of visitors, first responders (e.g., police, firemen) or witnesses (e.g., passerby at a motor vehicle accident). Confederates are most commonly colleagues (e.g., simulation educators, clinicians, research associates, and so forth) or actors employed for this specific role (Kassab et al., 2010). Sometimes, participants other than the intended learner group are recruited as confederates, whereas in some simulations, a fellow participant may be asked to take on this role. The practices of confederates in simulation education and research are summarized in the Table.

Confederates can serve several key functions in a scenario. They can engage participants, enhance realism, and augment or maintain the educational integrity of the learning encounter through information they provide explicitly as well as the affect they present. A well-prepared confederate helps keep simulation participants oriented from the outset of the scenario as participants transition from the “here and now” (Dieckmann) to the reality of the scenario by providing key information up front or as information is requested. Confederates can also provide appropriately timed prompts to help compensate in manikin-based simulation when simulator fidelity is insufficient to provide relevant clues for clinical decision making. It can be helpful to think of the educative function of the confederate on a spectrum from almost none (e.g., presence adds to reality, keeps participants safe) to directing and adjusting the scenario according to participants’ responses, pausing for discussion, and participating in debriefing and evaluation. That is, confederate roles can have little direct educative function through to that of a “role-playing” instructor or facilitator.

Confederates can also provide essential triggers that form the basis for desired actions on the part of the participants. When understanding or acceptance of the

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2645665>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2645665>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)