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A CLEAR Approach for the Novice Simulation Facilitator

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ABSTRACT

Facilitating a simulated clinical experience for prelicensure nursing students requires skills. Frequently, the experience is planned, presented, and debriefed by an educator assigned as the facilitator. The International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Best Practice StandardsSM provide the goals for all simulation experiences. This article identifies challenges frequently experienced by the novice facilitator in meeting the standards. A table with the acronym CLEAR has been developed to identify challenges and strategies to assist the novice facilitator to meet the INACSL Best Practice Standards: Simulation Standard V: FacilitatorSM recommendations. The strategies provide the facilitator innovative ways to promote successful simulation learning experiences.

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The use of simulation in health care education is a valuable teaching strategy that provides experiential learning opportunities. A simulation scenario immerses the learner in a clinical scenario that is followed by debriefing by a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is fundamental to the success of the experience and the debriefing of the learner. Knowing how to operationalize and deliver the facilitator role and responsibilities can be challenging for a novice. The purpose of this article is to provide suggestions, direction, and guidance to the novice simulation facilitator through the use of an original acronym CLEAR. The acronym utilizes the evidence-based recommendations from the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Best Practice StandardsSM. INACSL is an organization that works to inform and disseminate evidence-based healthcare simulation practices with the intent of improving patient safety (INACSL, 2015).

Background

The evidence-based recommendations for the novice simulation facilitator are derived from the INACSL Best Practice Standards: Simulation Standard V: Facilitator (Boese et al., 2013). The recommendations include ways to gain knowledge of the simulation teaching/learning pedagogy, develop skills to prepare for the facilitator role, and explore

qualities that embody a successful simulation facilitator. Standards of best practice provide guidelines, clarity, and a framework to ensure quality and consistency in simulation experiences for students (Alexander et al., 2015). The International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) Best Practice Standards help to equalize and balance the experience for participants by using evidence-based criteria for success and detail preparations necessary to assist learners in achieving desired outcomes. Standards provide a methodology to evaluate learner outcomes and decrease variation in simulation education (Rutherford-Hemming, Lioce, & Durham, 2015).

A few assumptions are posited by the authors. The first assumption is that training and approaches to facilitating simulation vary among organizations and programs (Casey, Roberts, & Salaman, 1992; Hallmark, 2015). The aim of this article is to establish a single voice and a first step for novice simulation facilitators to expand simulation knowledge and interest; it is not an exhaustive review of facilitation methods. Second, intended audiences are novice simulation facilitators. To define *novice*, the authors turn to Benner's seminal work, "From Novice to Expert (1982)", whereas "novice" is simply a person with no experience. To expand the scope of this work, the authors expanded the definition to include simulation facilitators with less than 1-year experience in debriefing techniques.

Definition of Facilitator and Differentiation Between "Facilitator" and "Debriefers"

According to the "INACSL Standards of Best Practice: Simulation Standard I: TerminologySM", a *facilitator* is defined as "an individual who provides guidance, support, and structure during simulation-

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based learning experiences” (Meakim et al., 2013, p. S6). In addition, Lekalakala-Mokgele and Du Rand (2005) define *facilitation* as a “method and strategy that occurs throughout (before, during, and after) simulation-based learning experiences in which a person helps to bring about an outcome(s) by providing unobtrusive guidance” (Meakim et al., 2013, p. S6).

Together, the two terms describe the continuous process in which a designated person conducts and guides the simulation experience from beginning to end. This differs from what this article terms as *debrief* or someone who is solely managing the deliberate process of dialog and reflection following a simulated scenario. Fanning and Gaba (2007) identify the elements of the debriefing process and note that, while elements may be done informally or even independently by the participants, it is the skilled role of the facilitator that will help move participants through the elements. While a facilitator often conducts the debriefing as an imbedded piece of the entire experience, it is important to note the facilitator’s more robust role in planning, implementing, and evaluating the simulation experience with and for learners.

The work of facilitating a simulation experience far exceeds a task that can be learned or delivered “on the fly.” Much of nursing and medical education is learned in this way; do one, see one, teach one method of learning on one’s feet (Coughlin, McElroy, & Patrick, 2010), but learner-centered and experiential learning pedagogy, such as simulation, is expanding this approach. The depth and detail of the facilitator standard is evidence that an intentional, detailed,

and mentored learning process for the novice simulation facilitator is necessary. In summary, if it is in the best interest that simulation participants learn in the spirit of experiential and reflective principles, so should the novice simulation facilitator.

As previously introduced, the acronym CLEAR was developed for the purpose of incorporating the INACSL Best Practice Standards into simulation facilitation. This was designed to offer guidance to the novice facilitator to identify the standard and recall mechanisms to support the standard while debriefing a learning experience. The acronym stands for “C” communication and constructive feedback; “L” learning partnerships and leader; “E” environment and ensure fidelity; “A” accommodation and assessment/evaluation; and “R” reflection. The CLEAR approach (Table 1) offers initial steps for the novice simulation facilitator to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Conceptual Framework: Martin Buber's Theory

One of the most challenging, yet rewarding, aspects of facilitating simulation is transforming the traditional teaching role to one of a side-by-side partnership with the learners. This notion of creating a learning partnership can be founded by the *I and Thou* book written by Martin Buber in 1923 and then expanded to include educational context by Robert Young in 1992. The author discusses the relationship in which people “see the world.” The seminal work goes on to explain that one can make observations of the world from an “I and

Table 1
CLEAR Recommendations for the Novice Simulation Facilitator

	Characteristic	Challenges	Strategy
C	Communication <i>Criterion 1</i>	“What” to communicate “How” to communicate	Share simulation objectives with learners Establish learner-focused discussion format Maintain an open posture; monitor nonverbal cues
	Constructive Feedback <i>Criterion 9</i>	Accepting and responding with constructive feedback	Role model being open to constructive feedback Utilize an evidence-based debriefing method to structure and guide feedback
L	Leadership <i>Criterion 6</i>	How to prepare for simulation.	Review simulation objectives and related content Be aware of common themes/“issues” Be prepared to discuss ethical issues
	Learning Partnership <i>Criterion 7</i>	How to partner with learners and maintain teacher-learner relationship How to engage with learners during simulation.	Be patient with all mistakes Express curiosity and respect for students Preobserve the simulation with another facilitator
E	Environment <i>Criterion 2/3</i>	How to decrease learner anxiety or fear of making mistakes How to help learners “overcome the fakeness” of simulated environment	Establish a safe learning environment View mistakes as triggers for learning Inquire with curiosity Allow time for hands-on interaction (manikin) Attention to details to create clinical realism Minimize interruptions
	Accommodation <i>Criterion 4</i>	Facilitate teaching based on assumed learner’s knowledge. How to adjust the simulation to meet the learners’ expressed needs.	Use open-ended questions or phrases to open discussion: “Talk about the situation when...” “How might you approach...?” “Help me understand more about...” “Share your thinking when...?” Use active listening skills Guide discussions per learners’ responses Accommodate to varied learning styles
	Assessment and Evaluation <i>Criterion 5</i>	What to talk about in debriefing	Promote discussion of observed actions in context with objectives/desired outcome Observe learners’ knowledge, skills, attitudes to guide facilitator’s debriefing points Use learner’s initial reactions or expressed feelings to guide a few debriefing points
R	Reflection <i>Criterion 8</i>	How to encourage reflective thinking	Ask learners for a take away message. Allow time to complete a formal evaluation Reflect on learners’ feedback and revise the experience as needed Role model reflection with an open-minded approach to “gray” areas

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