Assessment of a Joint Pharmacy and Theater Led Standardized Patient Training Program

Sarah E. Lynch, PharmD¹; Meagan Mielczarek, PhD²; William Sticht, BS¹; KarenBeth Bohan, PharmD, BCPS¹

¹Binghamton University School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

BACKGROUND

• Standardized patients (SPs) are used in healthcare education programs to present cases in a systematic, unvarying manner.
• Most available literature discusses the value of standardized patients in developing pharmacy student communication skills and comfort level.
• There is very little information available about how the SPs are trained and how they were assessed in their role as the patient.
• SPs are often used in high stakes assessments, so it is important to ensure that they are portraying the role as intended and providing appropriate and complete information to the pharmacy student.
• Pharmacy instructors at Binghamton University, a large public pharmacy school, partnered with instructors in the theater department to develop a standardized patient training program for undergraduate students.
• These students were employed as SPs for a first-year pharmacy student skills lab.

In order to determine whether SPs were performing in a standardized manner, instructors viewed the recorded interactions and scored each SP using an adapted Technical Skills Checklist.²

METHODS

• Prospective SPs attended a 2-part training session:
  • 3-hour live group training session led by pharmacy and theater instructors
  • 30-minute individual sign-off with pharmacy instructors to demonstrate skill and receive feedback
• Individuals who completed both these steps were assigned specific dates to work as an SP in a standardized pharmacy skills lab.

SP PERCEPTION SURVEY

• SPs were administered an online survey prior to their first SP session (demographics, opinions, confidence)

PS SKILLS LAB

• SPs were given their case one week prior to their scheduled session
  • Verbal communication (accuracy)
  • Nonverbal and paraverbal: character information and details that increase the realism of the case

ASSESSMENT OF SP PERFORMANCE

• Pharmacy instructors reviewed the recorded SP and pharmacy student interactions
• SPs were scored using a technical skills checklist adapted from Schleger et. al.²
• 3 pharmacy instructors reviewed each session and rated students on:
  • Verbal communication (accuracy)
  • Nonverbal/paraverbal communication (what they did and how they said things)
  • Global rating
• 3 different pharmacy student interactions were reviewed for each SP

RESULTS

• Although this program was conceived with the plan to include theater students the majority of SPs utilized during these sessions were not theater majors or minors, supporting the need for theater faculty participating in the training session to provide insight on performance skills.
• SPs demonstrated high verbal accuracy (85.41%). It is important that SPs provide correct information and only release information when asked in order to maintain standardization of scenarios.
• SPs performance of nonverbal/paraverbal directions was “Completed as expected” less than half the time (44.85%). Although not critical to this P1 Skills Lab, not performing specific nonverbal and paraverbal actions in other scenarios may lead to varying interpretations of the scenario by pharmacy students with the potential to compromise the session.
• For the Global SP rating, the majority of interactions were “Completed as expected” (66.90 – 99.30%) however there were still a high percentage that were “Completed Below Expectations” (3.7 – 32.39%).

• Limitations of this study included: small sample size and data from only a single semester.

CONCLUSIONS

• SPs provided highly accurate verbal information during their cases, indicating that they spent time preparing for the session and took their role seriously.
• Additional training on nonverbal and paraverbal performance should be added to the training session to improve SP performance in these areas.
• SP performance should be regularly assessed, particularly in high stakes activities, to ensure that healthcare professionals students are receiving the same information in a standardized manner.

Special acknowledgement to Elizabeth Moxey, BA, MFA and the Theatre Department at Binghamton University for their help and support in this program.

REFERENCES