



**Qualitative Research Component for the Florida
Center for Nursing project entitled
"Promoting the Use of Simulation
Technology in Florida Nurse Education"**

Executive Summary

Prepared for:

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SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Background – The Florida Center for Nursing (FCN) estimates a shortfall of registered nurses in Florida of over 52,200 full-time equivalent positions by 2020.

To explore possible solutions to the shortage, the Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida and the FCN are serving as project leaders for a Partners Investing in Nursing's Future (PIN) grant. The PIN program is a national initiative led by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Northwest Health Foundation to address the nursing shortage. The purpose of the 2-year project is to evaluate how simulation technology is being used to provide clinical experiences for both educating new nurses, and in retention of nurses through retraining in new skills. The State of Florida permits the use of simulation to substitute for up to 25 percent of the clinical practice hours in a basic nursing education program. Knowledge of issues, barriers, and effective strategies related to the use of simulation is critical in designing best practices for using simulation to address nursing workforce issues. In addition, options for the creation of regional simulation centers to promote excellence and efficiency will be explored.

As part of year one of the project PROMOTING THE USE OF SIMULATION TECHNOLOGY IN FLORIDA NURSE EDUCATION, data collection and analysis will be conducted for quantitative results. SRA conducted 8 focus groups and 10 individual depth interviews (IDI) to obtain qualitative information.

Objectives – The overall objective of the focus group and IDI research is to better understand how to engage stakeholders in the issues this project is addressing, and specifically to determine stakeholders' influence on:

- The use of simulation technology as a valid approach to resolving the nursing crisis
- How the nursing shortage requires a collaborative effort in order to be resolved

Participants – In order to qualify for participation in the focus groups, respondents represented various stakeholder populations in the eight geographic regions who could contribute to understanding the potential uses of simulation training. In each region, the group typically included representation from the following:

- Educators
- Employers
- Community representatives/leaders
- Nurses
- Nursing students

The individual depth interviews were conducted among state legislators, funders, and technical resource representatives. Individuals selected to be interviewed were based on available resources from SRA, the FCN, Advisory Panel members, and Project Team members.

Moderation – Barbara Allan, CEO of SRA Research Group, served as moderator for the focus groups and IDIs.

Confidentiality – All individuals who participated in the focus groups and IDIs were informed that the sessions were audio recorded and that their individual comments would remain confidential.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary is based upon primary research conducted in each region of the State of Florida among key stakeholders identified as educators, employers, community representatives/leaders, nurses, and nursing students. As well, it is based upon insights gained from in-depth interviews with people who supply technical resources involved in simulation, State of Florida legislators, and funders.

The goal of this primary research is to better understand how to engage stakeholders in the issues surrounding simulation technology, and specifically to determine stakeholders' opinions regarding:

- The use of simulation technology as a valid approach to resolving the nursing crisis
- How the nursing shortage requires a collaborative effort in order to be resolved

Additional objectives are to determine:

- Attitudes among key constituents related to using simulation technology
- Current knowledge levels and degree of expertise with simulation technology
- Perceived strengths and weaknesses of using simulation technology as a replacement for clinical training
- Actual use of simulation technology
- Additional equipment and simulation technology needed to meet 25% training threshold
- Ability and willingness to share simulation technology resources

This executive summary outlines recommendations based upon supportive documentation provided.

Findings

Emphasize the strong benefits that exist in order to help create better awareness and support of simulation.

The benefits associated with simulation include:

- Creates clinical experiences in a controlled environment
- Provides opportunities to learn from mistakes in a risk free environment
- Creates better patient safety
- Provides access to better preparation
- Permits students to obtain skills/knowledge through hands on education as opposed to lectures/reading
- Reduces anxiety and stress for nurses/students, thus promoting more learning
- Provides consistent exposure to a full spectrum of experiences
- Helps instructors develop and focus on needed learning objectives
- Promotes learning through repetition
- Exposes nurses to high-risk situations in a risk free environment
- Monitors and helps develop critical thinking skills

- Promotes the use of multi-disciplinary teams
- Alleviates silos perceived to exist in clinical settings
- Improves communication skills

Tackle the barriers to simulation with collaborative efforts and resources designed to aid in establishing guidelines and requirements that promote success and sustainability.

Foremost, the cost associated with the creation and maintenance of a simulation lab is the major barrier. Most organizations simply cannot afford it.

Other major barriers include:

- Acquiring, training, and retaining qualified staff
- Absence of strategic plan in place before purchase
- Staff turnover/trainer burn out
- Faculty preparation time to create scenarios
- Technical difficulties with simulators
- Space required
- Resources to maintain mannequins/equipment
- Scheduling
- Purchase/availability of auxiliary supplies
- Lack of support from head of organization
- Absence of evidence-based research

The development of collaborative regional simulation centers, able to support the full gamut of allied health professionals, will allow access to simulation that may be precluded by acquisition and operating funding and staff resources. It may also help promote a full 25% usage of simulation for training.

Recommendations to expand the use of simulation to address the nursing shortage

Create opportunities to provide consistent access to simulation throughout the State of Florida.

Not all regions have the same level of access to simulation, thus creating gaps in the state in terms of coverage and training.

It appears the more rural sections of the state are those with the greatest gaps.

A piecemeal system of access to simulation, based purely upon geography, will not achieve the statewide support needed.

Acquire and support the development of evidence-based research to demonstrate the benefits of simulation.

In order to promote development and greater usage of simulation, peer review studies demonstrating its benefits are required.

Many current champions of simulation have difficulty obtaining required buy-in from executives in their organizations to purchase and support simulation. This lack of support is based upon the fact that simulation, to many, is perceived as a big expense without proof that it adds value.

Further, evidence-based research will help open doors to legislators who currently may have little awareness or understanding of simulation and its value.

Even more knowledgeable funders and legislators, in this economic climate, need as much justification as possible that simulation should be supported.

Involve all known stakeholders and look for new stakeholders in allied fields.

Simulation has many stakeholder advocates. In order to become an acknowledged standard for training of nurses, it needs to be recognized for what it provides among all entities interested in ensuring quality health care in the State of Florida.

These include, but are not limited to, educators, employers, community representatives/leaders, nurses, nursing students, health care systems, hospital administrators, legislators, funders, and technical resources.

Promote the vitality and advocacy of the new breed of nurses being trained on simulation.

According to leading manufacturers of simulation equipment, new nurses are strong proponents of simulation and are not willing to take a step back after using and seeing how simulation supports and educates nurses.

In fact, interviews with representatives of leading manufacturers point to the establishment of simulation labs in different places in the country based upon the urging of these new nurses.

These "digital natives" are on the leading edge of simulation and should be organized and used as resource proponents of simulation.

On the flip side, nurses and educators resistant to or fearful of simulation tend to be on the brink of retirement and, thus, may have nominal negative influence on growth in the adoption of simulation.

Develop standardized strategic plans for simulation centers.

Clearly, a gap exists in terms of development of simulation centers. According to research respondents, there does not appear to be a standardized duplicable plan that can provide guidance for:

- Space requirements
- Equipment purchases
- Recruiting, training, and supporting staff
- Programming
- Maintenance

Develop a statewide software lending library of simulation scenarios.

This will achieve several things. It will support existing educators, while also providing guidelines and assistance to organizations new to simulation. It also has the potential to encourage collaboration and perhaps help create more "champions" of simulation.

A lending library would:

- Help educators reduce preparation time
- Help reduce required programming
- Standardize training
- Open more hours for full use of simulation/scenarios offered

Segment communication efforts regarding the benefits associated with simulation to the various audiences that exist.

While the benefits identified were similar across all research respondents, to continue making headway with the recognition and acceptance of simulation, current and future stakeholders need to understand how the use of simulation will directly influence their operations.

For example, with the ramped-up Federal agenda to monitor and evaluate hospitals on patient satisfaction and quality of care, hospital administrators may be very interested in understanding how the use of simulation may influence their patient safety scores.

Comparatively, educators and trainers may want to better understand how simulation can provide students with better preparation and less anxiety and stress.

Involve and inform as many legislators as possible, who serve on health committees or who are medical professionals, regarding the work being achieved with simulation.

Those who have some knowledge of health needs are most apt to first, understand and second, have some willingness to be proponents of simulation.

Legislator input indicates that those without a medical interest may have limited interest in supporting simulation.

Develop an educational marketing DVD that can bring simulation to life for funders and legislators, in particular.

It became clear in the research that the the adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" is applicable to getting across the idea of simulation.

Funders and legislators, who have not experienced simulation first-hand, need to be able to quickly visualize what it is and what can be achieved through its use.

It is suggested that manufacturers of simulation, and perhaps organizations with a vested interest in maintaining quality health care in an affordable manner, such as health insurance companies, be tapped as resources/contributors to the development of such a DVD.

Recommendations to create a better understanding of the nursing shortage overall

Create a stronger organization of nursing advocates to develop a greater understanding of the nursing shortage and how simulation can help with nursing education.

No one organization stands out as being the champion for nursing in Florida, particularly among legislators.

Comparatively, legislators and many other stakeholders feel physicians are better organized than nurses and are acknowledged as more active users of simulation.

With the financial and resource support of others, a champion (perhaps the Florida Center for Nursing) can take on the mantle of making Floridians and stakeholders aware of the important role nurses play, and will continue to play, in terms of quality health care.

Launch grassroots efforts to educate stakeholders and Floridians regarding the nursing shortage and the potential outcomes if it is not addressed.

All research respondents indicated that they perceive a nursing shortage exists.

However they also feel most Floridians are either neutral or nonchalant about it, with limited inertia to do anything to alleviate an impending quality of health care crisis that could hit Florida. According to one legislator respondent:

"It (nursing shortage) doesn't matter to the average consumer. They just want them (nurses) to be trained properly and licensed when they go to the bedside."

Without support of their constituents, the nursing shortage appears to be a back burner issue for legislators.

Address the shortage of nursing programs and educators.

Legislator respondents, in particular, feel that one of the largest issues facing nursing education is the lack of available nursing programs and educators.