

SIMmersion® Supports National Mental Health Awareness Month

SIMmersion® won multiple grant awards from the National Institutes of Health to develop virtual role-players to help mental healthcare providers build skills.

COLUMBIA, MD, UNITED STATES, May 2, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Taye Banks actively thinks about ending her life every day and can't get it out of her head. She made one attempt in high school and now has developed a better plan to take her own life. Imagine how hard it would be to help Taye through this difficult time to potentially save her life. Even the slightest mistake could have significant consequences.

Fortunately, Taye is only a role-player, but mental health providers need to be able to help individuals like her. As part of their education, they can sit in PowerPoint

lectures, read books, and watch videos on working with people with mental health challenges. They will also work with other providers during their clinical residency to build their skills. But often that education is not sufficient to build all the required skills. Fortunately, clinicians can now develop these skills in a risk-free environment by practicing with virtual role-players.

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We take pride in the work we do to help train mental healthcare providers.”

Dale Olsen, Ph.D.

[Suicide Intervention](#)

Just like a real person idealizing suicide, role-player Taye is not always at high risk; she may be at moderate risk, or even at low risk with no specific active thoughts of suicide. Additionally, her risk factors can vary which creates a wide variety of training experiences for mental health providers allowing for increased skill development and refinement. She is one of three virtual role-players that mental



Figure 1 – Taye Banks

health providers can practice counseling sessions focused on suicide interventions. Click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymtS7jBGizg> to watch a YouTube video on SIMmersion's suicide prevention training or click <https://www.simmersion.com/suicideprevention> to learn more.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Training (CBT)

While Suicide Intervention techniques are tailored specifically for people idealizing suicide, "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a form of psychological treatment that has been demonstrated to be effective for a range of problems including depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, marital problems, eating disorders, and severe mental illness." (American Psychology Association) SIMmersion has developed training systems, so that providers can practice applying CBT with three different virtual role-players who are struggling with alcohol dependence. Learn more at <https://www.simmersion.com/trainingcbt>.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Skill Assessment

Assessing the ability of a mental healthcare provider to properly apply CBT and be certified requires recording sessions with real clients and then having a certified provider carefully evaluate them. Candidates must get their clients to agree to be recorded during a session and then they select the sessions they want to submit for certification. There are many issues with this approach, but up to now, it has been the only one available. SIMmersion has recently developed six virtual role-players designed specifically to evaluate provider's skills at applying CBT associated with both Cognitive Restructuring and Exposure for Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, and Social Anxiety Disorder. This assessment system produces results similar to the traditional recording and evaluation process, but without the need to record and evaluate specially selected sessions. Since the evaluation is scored based only on the candidate's



Figure 2 - Taking CBT Assessment



Figure 3 - Working with a Virtual LGBTQ+ Client

choices, the assessment is completely objective.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (MI) “is a client-centered yet directive approach for facilitating change by helping people to resolve ambivalence and find intrinsic reasons for making needed behavioral changes. Originally designed for people with substance use disorders, motivational interviewing is now broadly applied in health care, psychotherapy, correctional, and counseling settings.” (Source APA dictionary)

Like CBT, learning to apply Motivational Interviewing techniques requires practice. SIMmersion provides a multi-faceted system, so that providers can practice applying MI and have very different experiences each time. Click <https://www.simmersion.com/mi> to learn more. While applying MI techniques can take more time than many providers have, faster techniques stemming from MI have been developed. One called Brief Motivational Intervention has been implemented in a virtual role-player training system, so that providers can practice applying a shorter technique. Click <https://www.simmersion.com/briefmi> to learn more.

Gender Affirmative Therapy

According to Mental Health America, nearly 5.8 million people in the LGBTQ+ community reported having mental illness in the past year. When people do openly express this part of themselves, they face the potential of rejection from peers, colleagues, and friends, so it's not surprising that LGBTQ+ people used mental health services at 2.5 times higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts. The community is a highly diverse one, with unique needs. Mental health providers are not always prepared to provide the needed specialized service, so with funding from the National Institutes of Health, SIMmersion developed a series of role-player-based training systems, so providers can practice providing special services. To learn more about intake, watch our YouTube video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azEMSRaKvyl>. You can also click to learn more about “Traditional Needs” at <https://www.simmersion.com/products/Gender-Affirmative-Therapy--Traditional-Needs-with-James> and “Transitioning” at <https://www.simmersion.com/products/Gender-Affirmative-Therapy--Transition-with-Lucas>.

Final Remarks

According to the CDC, “more than 50% (of people in the U.S.) will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.” To help support Mental Health Awareness, SIMmersion has proudly developed numerous training systems designed to support mental healthcare providers. These systems help providers to work with, and treat, those who idealize suicide, are depressed, have anxiety disorders or alcohol and drug use problems, marital problems, eating disorders, severe mental illness, or need gender affirmative care.

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