

Universities Teaching Behavioral Healthcare Use SIMmersion® Virtual Role-Plays to Practice Clinical Sessions

Role-player training systems include suicide intervention, gender affirmative therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and motivational interviewing.

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Introduction

“Nearly half of all Americans will have a behavioral health issue in their lifetime, from a mood disorder to a substance use problem. Behavioral health care encompasses a wide variety of interventions delivered by many different types of providers. In the U.S., nearly all these providers are in short supply.” (From [The Commonwealth Fund](#), Improving Health Care Quality). SIMmersion has a history of developing training systems to support the behavioral health



Figure 1. Using a SIMmersion product in the classroom

“

In the U.S., nearly all [behavioral health] providers are in short supply. As of March 2023, ... over 8,000 more professionals needed to ensure an adequate supply.”

The Commonwealth Fund

community and helping to meet this critical need. These systems provide experiences using evidence-based procedures. Figure 1 shows a professor lecturing using a SIMmersion practice system. Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/> to learn more.

Screening and Brief Intervention for Alcohol Abuse

In 2006, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) recognized the value of SIMmersion’s [PeopleSim® role-player technology](#) and funded the

company, through a Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) grant, to build a [Screening, Brief Intervention, & Referral](#) (SBIRT) training system. Research showed that this first behavioral healthcare system was highly effective at training providers and that the training had a lasting effect on the participants. See the Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine, 22(4), 387-

398.

<https://doi.org/10.3122/jabfm.2009.04.080208>). While that system targeted practicing healthcare providers, it currently provides valuable practice for students in university programs.

Motivational Interviewing

That work led to National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding the development of new systems that provided the opportunity for both students and practitioners to develop other critical clinical skills. In particular, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded a system that made it possible to practice motivational interviewing (MI) with a role-player. This practice system provides the opportunity to conduct an entire session where students had a new client who was addicted to cocaine. Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/mi> to learn more.



Figure 2. CBT role-players



Figure 3. Student practicing gender affirmative therapy

However, many providers cannot spend fifty minutes with a patient and need to be able to provide needed support in about 15 minutes. In response to this need, SIMmersion developed a Brief Motivational Intervention role-player who is dealing with alcohol abuse. That training has been particularly helpful and in demand. Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/briefmi> to learn more.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Alcohol Abuse

A suite of systems was funded by NIAAA to help both university students and active clinicians practice providing needed support to clients struggling with alcohol abuse. Like other SIMmersion training systems, research showed that the suite provided highly effective training. The suite consists of three training systems:

- An introduction to CBT
- Functional Analysis
- Creating a change plan

Figure 2 shows the role-players for these systems. Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/trainingcbt> to learn more.

Suicide Intervention

As part of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Zero Suicide program, SIMmersion was funded to build a suite of training systems to help both university students and working clinicians practice providing needed support to clients struggling with suicidal ideation. The suite consists of three practice training systems. These practices are designed to help build the skills needed to:

- Effectively assess patient risk
- Motivate patients to seek treatment
- Collaboratively develop effective safety plans

Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/suicideprevention> to learn more.

Gender Affirmative Therapy

Support for clients needing gender affirmative care can be complicated. As a result, a suite of three training systems was funded by The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). This suite of systems helps behavioral healthcare specialists practice:

- Creating a safe and inclusive environment during an intake
- Building skills needed to support gender diverse clients in discrimination and social situations
- Building skills needed to support clients during transitioning

Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/genderaffirmativetherapy> to learn more.

Additionally, SIMmersion also built gender affirmative therapy systems to support care when the clients' needs are critical, such as when a client:

- Has just tested positive for HIV
- Is experiencing interpersonal violence
- Is having thoughts of suicide

Visit <https://www.simmersion.com/edengenderaffirmativetherapy> to learn more.

Concluding Remarks

SIMmersion has a long and satisfying history of supporting the needs of the healthcare community. The company is currently developing more role-play systems to help support the training and assessment needs of the behavioral healthcare community.

About SIMmersion

SIMmersion's mission is to train communication skills faster and more effectively by combining the world's most realistic simulation experiences with interactive training content and extensive feedback. Their practice systems also include comprehensive educational content. For more information, contact SIMmersion by calling 443 283 2555 or online at

www.simmersion.com/contact.

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