Simulation Enhances Soft Skills Among Inter-Professionals Participating in an International Service-Learning Experience to a Resource-Limited Country

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Simulation Enhances Soft Skills Among Inter-professionals Participating in an International Service-Learning Experience to a Resource Limited Country
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INTRODUCTION:
- Soft skills encompass many elements of emotional intelligence for quality patient-centered care.1
- Service-learning can effectively teach soft skills to health care providers (HCP).2-3
- Evidence suggests that adding simulation to pre-departure training (PDT) for service-learning will better prepare HCP to resolve ethical and cultural dilemmas4 plus facilitate soft skills.4,5
- Limited research exists for establishing best-practice using simulation for HCP in preparing for service to a resource limited country.

PURPOSE:
Does simulation training improve soft skills of physical and occupational therapy students and clinicians providing rehabilitation services on a one-week service-learning experience in Guatemala?

METHODS:
- A convenience sample of 21 physical and occupational therapy students and clinicians who participated in four 1-hour PDTs before traveling to Guatemala were included in this qualitative study using grounded-theory methods.
- PDT consisted of didactic, reflective and simulation components designed to introduce self-awareness, team-building, cultural knowledge, and trip preparations.
- 4 debriefings were recorded using open-ended questions with a thematic approach around the concept of preparedness and cultural adaptability.
- The dependent variable was subject preparedness and cultural adaptability.
- The independent variable was a 20-minute simulation emphasizing cultural and socio-emotional challenges of the resource limited country.
- Researchers independently coded transcripts for themes

RESULTS:
- 6 themes emerged: confidence, empathy, communication, mentorship, self-knowledge, cultural competency
- As a result of the simulation experience, participants stated they were better able to respond to distressing situations encountered in Guatemala by utilizing soft skills

DISCUSSION:
- Responding empathetically to patient’s in moments of distress was a highly evident theme within the participant’s dialogue:
  - From the simulation encounter-participants demonstrated a complete lack of response to an emotionally charged situation.
  - Onsite in Guatemala-participants were able to respond in a highly empathetic manner when faced with similar situations.
- Self-knowledge is commonly thought to be the initial stage of personal growth, and participants expressed the service-learning experience, supported by the PDT simulation, stirred significant maturation.

CONCLUSION:
- Simulation for enhancement of international service-learning trips is recommended as best practice to prepare HCP in facing ethical and cultural demands of resource-limited countries.
- Simulation appears effective for developing self-regulatory skills, especially in response to culturally-novel, emotionally-charged settings.

REFERENCES: