

# Relational Simulation Laboratory Implementation in Clinical Training: The SimuLab Project.

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**Background:** Competence has been described as composed by three domains: Knowledge domain, Psychomotor domain and Relational domain.<sup>1</sup> Osteopathic education and osteopathic curricula put great emphasis on the knowledge and psychomotor domains.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the growing body of evidences asserting the impact of communication skill and patient-clinician relationship on the outcome of the treatments<sup>3</sup>, the relational skills are demanded to the self-directed, on-field, informal learning and cannot find a structured space into the vast majority of osteopathic curricula. The SimuLab Project aims to propose a structured Teaching/Learning Activity (TLA) to address the Relational domain of clinical competence<sup>4</sup> in a Competency Based Osteopathic Curriculum<sup>5</sup>.

**How we did it:** The SimuLab Project was structured through six phases, namely:

1. Needs assessment of the three stakeholders: the needs assessment was conducted firstly through a survey. The involved stakeholders were: the students in their clinical year (4th-5th), the clinical tutors, and the clinical administrators and directors. The students survey investigated the educational needs of students in relation to different dimensions of clinical competence; the clinical tutors survey investigated the perception of tutors in relation of the area of improvements of students' clinical competence; while the admins/directors survey investigated their perception of the area of improvements of the whole clinical process based on patients' feedback. After the survey a selected group from the three stakeholders was involved in a Focus Group to elicit the meanings they attributed to the survey results.
2. Implementation of a training program for tutors: Two psychologists members of the Italian Society of Medical Education (SIPeM) expert in Simulation held a two days training program on the methodology of Relational Simulation and on theoretical models of communication for clinical tutors. The course aimed to make tutors able to design and deliver sessions of relational simulation.
3. Implementation of a training program for students: The same psychologists held a training program of two days for the 4<sup>th</sup> year students. The course aimed to make students able to build relational simulation scenarios, to adopt specific

- theoretical models of communication during a simulated clinical encounter and to participate in a relational simulation scenario as “the osteopath”.
4. Implementation of a training program for actors: A professional actress, with a teaching background in simulated expert patients for simulations, held a training program for all the students among the five years to become performers as patients during the relational simulation. The program was carried out in for weeks to small groups of volunteer students.
  5. Implementation of the SimuLab in the Curriculum: The SimuLab Project was implemented after an iterative process of the step 3 within two years. The Simulation sessions were scheduled as additional hours of clinical training (in addition to the 1000 hours already in place) for the students of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years.
  6. Outcome evaluation: An evaluation of the impact of the newly introduced TLA is planned in accordance to the Kirkpatrick Framework.

## References

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