

The Standardized Patient Program

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What is the Standardized Patient Program?

The University of Windsor employs Standardized Patients in the training and evaluation of health care professionals including nursing and medical students. The Standardized Patient Program developed from the need to standardize case scenarios for evaluation in nursing and in medical education. Since its inception, the program has evolved and standardized patients (SPs) are now included in the nursing and medical education curriculums for first and second year students.

Facts about Standardized Patients

- Standardized Patients (SPs) are people who have been coached and trained to simulate an actual patient; not just the patient's history but the body language, physical findings, emotions and personalities
- SPs do not require medical knowledge
- Some SPs are actors but many are not
- SPs come from all walks of life, of all ages and all backgrounds
- The common thread among all SPs is the desire of helping others

What Do Standardized Patients Do?

- You will be interviewed by the student
- You may or may not be examined (depending on the scenario given) by nursing or medical students
- You may see several students on a one-to-one basis during an evaluation session or you may see groups of 2 – 8 students in a teaching session

How Standardized Patients Help Teaching

- **Interpersonal Skills:** Students may perfect interpersonal skills by practicing on SPs as performance is monitored by colleagues and faculty
- **History and Physical:** Teaching and evaluation of history-taking and physical examination skills are learned through guided practice – feedback, practice, feedback – SPs offer repeated practice opportunity and the ability to describe, from the standpoint of the patient, how the encounter felt
- **Clinical Reasoning Analysis:** The 'time out' technique allows the facilitator or instructor to probe the student's clinical reasoning process in detail during the encounter
- **Patient Education:** Guided practice with feedback during an encounter helps facilitate the skills to make content understandable to the patient, incorporate the patient's expectations and encourage compliance
- **OSCE's:** SPs provide valid, standardized evaluation of the student's clinical performance and provide the opportunity for 'hands on' experiences with patients
- SPs may be used in a variety of ways:
 - In-class interviews or exams
 - Multiple SPs may play the same role for small group work or large group settings
 - SPs may also be used in conjunction with video or audio tape or discussion triggers in the form of dramas or scripted exchanges