

# Simulated Participant Methodology



An open access professional development module for simulationists

# How to use this module



**Module progresses from foundational concepts to advanced practice. Self direct how deep you want to go!**

**Exercises are designed to work on your own or to discuss with a friend over coffee.**



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# Simulated Participant Methodology

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## Overview:

Simulated Participants provide the opportunity to enhance authenticity and hone communication skills in simulation. If you're not familiar, the term Simulated Participant (or SP) refers to a person who is well that portrays illness or the role of a family member within a simulated scenario. SPs can be flexible roles that support learning or can be prescriptive and standardised, for exams, for example.

SPs are highly trained and require educators to have an understanding of who and what their role is within a simulation.

## Exercise 1: Foundational Principles

### Read the article:

- [“It’s Not an Acting Job...Don’t Underestimate What a Simulated Patient Does?”: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Perspectives of Simulated Patients in Health Professions Education<sup>1</sup>](#)

### Ask yourself:

- What is the role of Simulated Participants in your setting?

### Retrieval practice:

- Discuss with your colleague what are the Evidence Based best practice for SPs in simulation.

### Thorny questions:

- What are the differences between the terms Simulated Participant, Simulated Patient and Standardised Patient?
- Is working with an SP a low fidelity or high-fidelity simulation activity?
- For locations that don't have SPs in their simulations, how could you engage them?

### Dig deeper by reading :

- [The Association of Standardized Patient Educators \(ASPE\) Standards of Best Practice \(SOBP\)<sup>2</sup>](#)

## Exercise 2: Risk Mitigation

### Read the article:

- [Developing a simulation safety policy for translational simulation programs in healthcare<sup>3</sup>](#)

### Ask yourself:

- What are the potential risks of working with SPs in your working environment?

### Retrieval practice:

- Discuss with your colleague what current safety measures in your place of work that you could apply to working with SPs

### Thorny questions:

- What are some near miss experiences that might be considered?
- What will you do if an incident does occur?
- How will you ensure psychological safety of your team?

## Exercise 3: Integrating SP Feedback

### Read this article:

- [Feedback by simulated patients in undergraduate medical education: a systematic review of the literature<sup>4</sup>](#)

### Ask yourself:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of integrating SP feedback?

### Retrieval practice:

- How you might approach integrating SP feedback in your simulations?
- Discuss with your colleague the boundaries of feedback topics for SPs

### Thorny questions:

- What could be some unintended consequences of SP feedback?

### Dig deeper:

- Read this article :
  - [Experiences of simulated patients in providing feedback in communication skills teaching for undergraduate medical students<sup>5</sup>](#)
- What do SPs think about giving feedback?

## Exercise 4: Working with elderly SPs

### Read this blog post :

- [Working with older Simulated Patients to deliver effective geriatric simulations<sup>6</sup>](#)

### Ask yourself or discuss with a colleague:

- Why engage older adults as SPs?
- Why not young people dressed as old?
- What are the unique considerations that simulation educators need to consider when working with older SP?
- How will you apply these strategies into your simulation program? Give examples.

### Dig deeper:

- Read this article : [“Please let me know when I do not realize it myself”: a qualitative analysis of senior simulated patients’ experiences.<sup>7</sup>](#)

## Exercise 5 : Diversity and inclusion “Words and voices matter!”

### Read this article :

- [Diversity and inclusion in simulation: addressing ethical and psychological safety concerns when working with simulated participants<sup>8</sup>](#)

### Discuss with a colleague:

- How do we make a simulation program more inclusive and diverse?
- To meet the need of your learners and your simulation program you might consider starting an SP program with a specific population for example (paediatric, geriatric) , list practical solutions and steps to achieve this.



### Thorny question:

- How do we make sure that the term “*using SPs*” is banished from the simulation word and start showing respect “*working with SPs*”?

### Dig deeper:

- Read this paper on [Engaging children as simulated patients in healthcare education](#)<sup>9</sup>

## Additional Resources and Deep Dives

- [Stereotypes, Archetypes and Authentic Portrayal of Roles Video](#)<sup>10</sup>

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**PhD (MedEd), M Nurs (Adv Prac), GCCC (ICU), BN, RN**

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Jess is an ICU RN and health professions educator who works across academia and professional development. She's the academic lead for the Simulated Participant Program at Bond University (amongst other things) and is known to dabble in science communication, special effects makeup, and all activities related to the ocean.



**Nemat Alsaba**

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**MBBS, FACEM**

**Emergency Physician at the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service.**

**A/Professor in medical education and simulation at Bond University**

**Deputy Director of Bond Simulation Program.**

Nemat is an emergency physician passionate about Geriatric Emergency Medicine (GEM), simulation, working with simulated participants (SP), and interprofessional collaboration, trying her best to combine all to improve the care of older people. Nemat is also a Harvard Macy Alumni.

When she is not busy working or teaching, she enjoys the company of her three adult kids and taking photos of the sky and cloud formations.



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Ruth-Ellen is an emergency physician and medical educator with developing skills and research involvement in simulation. She enjoys facilitating small group learning in the Bond medical school in addition to her simulation role and translating her education skills to training her Australian shepherd puppy.