

Safety 1 FIRST

Jacksonville
campus revamps
patient safety
training using
simulation



PHOTO BY DAVID CONE

The College of Medicine-Jacksonville is using simulation to teach residents and fellows important patient safety skills.

By Bridget Higginbotham

Phones ringing. People running around. Equipment beeping. Colleagues asking for advice or a signature. Everything happening so fast.

“As doctors, that’s the environment we work in,” said Constance Haan, M.D., M.S., senior associate dean for educational affairs for the College of Medicine-Jacksonville. “How are you sure you’re safe? How are you sure your patient is safe?”

The Institute of Medicine estimates that each year medical errors cause between 44,000 and 98,000 patient deaths and result in a total cost of \$17 billion to \$29 billion. So patient safety training is important, but how much do physicians really absorb from sitting in a classroom or lecture hall?

Enter simulation learning: the college’s new method of teaching residents and fellows the fundamentals of safety such as good communication, teamwork and awareness.

With the help of Andy Godwin, M.D., and the staff at the Center for Simulation Education and Safety Research, the training provides hands-on practice with standardized patients and high-fidelity mannequins — computer-controlled, interactive robots that mimic the human condition.

“We’re giving them a chance to practice what we expect them to do in day-to-day work,” Haan said. “We’re trying to help young physicians prevent errors by reinforcing behavior patterns for safety.”

Reading material is posted online and residents and fellows sign up for one of the 12-person, 90-minute, hands-on sessions. The trainees work through different real-life situations that emphasize the fundamental principles of patient safety, such as communication; thorough hand washing and hygiene; properly identifying patients; and medication safety, stressing that some drugs may look and sound similar.

Haan does not know of any other institution teaching patient safety with simulation scenarios and vignettes, so the training is set up in an Institutional Review Board study format. The trainees are split into two different groups so Haan and her team can determine which teaching method is more effective. The first group works through brief vignettes as small teams. The second works through more complex scenarios using role-playing and interaction

with larger groups.

So far, residents and fellows who have gone through the new training say they appreciate not sitting in a classroom. The true results of the program will be explored when trainees are later tested for learning retention and patient safety indicators are analyzed for impact.

“I don’t want them to just enjoy it,” Haan said. “I want them to apply what they’ve learned.”

Eventually, the goal is for everyone on the Jacksonville campus to go through the training as teams because physicians, pharmacists and nurses work together in real situations. Right now, pharmacy and nursing faculty participate in the training as actors so the residents and fellows can become accustomed to interacting with other disciplines.

The program uses principles of evidence-based adult learning theory to modify behavior in accordance with national safety goals issued by the Joint Commission. These goals are designed to avoid mistakes such as wrong-site surgery, health care-associated infection or misinterpreted written or verbal orders.

“These are the fundamentals,” Haan said. “It matters less how smart and skilled we are if we’re missing the fundamentals.” 