

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# Paper or Plastic?

## Why hyper-realistic mannequins are better than textbooks and tests

By Sandra Bienkowski

●●● **YOU'RE HAVING A HEART ATTACK.** Quick: Will you receive better care from a nurse trained with traditional pen-and-paper tests or with state-of-the-art simulation mannequins? Mannequins give nurses an edge that could save your life, says Dr. Sharon Kay Powell-Laney '10, who earned an Ed.D. and received Walden's Outstanding Doctoral Study Award for her research into the topic. Here she shares how mannequins benefit students and patients.

### REPLICATE ANY SCENARIO

Powell-Laney's hyper-realistic, 75-pound human patient mannequins can breathe, talk, and mimic common patient conditions that students might encounter in real life. Simulations include a patient having a heart attack or a stroke, a patient who is pregnant, and patients who have had operations where something went wrong.

Dr. Sharon Kay Powell-Laney is the coordinator at the Princeton Information Technology Center (PITC) School of Nursing in Glenside, Pa. She is also an adjunct professor at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., and teaches nursing classes several times a year in Cap Haitien, Haiti.



### THINK LIKE A NURSE

"For many years, we struggled with getting students to think like nurses and not nursing students, because the instructor is always there to help. The human patient simulators help students bridge the gap from theory to practice more easily," Powell-Laney says.

### INCREASE SPEED OF CARE

"My research found students educated in the care of a patient with a heart attack through simulation were able to perform CPR 30 seconds faster than students taught through a traditional pen-and-paper case study," she explains. "In traditional clinical training, nurses may take care of a few patients a day, but they never encounter all the patient problems you can replicate with human patient simulators," Powell-Laney says.

### IMPROVE CONFIDENCE

Studies show simulators increase confidence. "If you have done something once, the next time you do it, it's easier," Powell-Laney reasons. "Simulated encounters are still encounters. Through patient encounters, nurses gain expert status."

### TEACH CRITICAL THINKING

One scenario replicates a motorcycle accident. "Students have to use critical thinking to figure out that the patient is getting pneumonia, while taking care of immediate needs—like wrapping her leg—at the same time," Powell-Laney explains.

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