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Abstract

Published 01/27/2023

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Exploring the Use of Simulation-Based Learning with Community-based Settings to Promote Clinical Practice Competencies in Practitioners

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Nikdel D, Jenney D (January 27, 2023) Exploring the Use of Simulation-Based Learning with Community-based Settings to Promote Clinical Practice Competencies in Practitioners. Cureus 15(1): a833

Abstract

Background

Despite the use of simulation-based learning (SBL) as a pedagogical approach to enhance students' experiential learning opportunities, SBL has not been widely used in promoting clinical competencies within community-based practice settings. Coupled with the exponential rise in child and adult mental health issues since the onset of the pandemic, immediate access to community-based mental health services for families has highlighted the need for skilled staff and practitioners. These skills are not taught in classroom settings, but rather through intense training programs and on-the-job learning experiences. However, the onboarding time and resources for each staff is significant and costly.

Objective

By partnering with a community-based mental health and children's service agency, this research project sought to create and research the use of virtual gaming simulations (VGS) as a mechanism to improve access to trauma-informed clinical skills training and provide opportunities for the development of clinical practice competencies in both student and professional practitioners.

Description

This project created a team consisting of student interns from all levels (bachelor, master, doctoral and post-doctoral) and a variety of disciplines (health, social sciences, arts) and professionals from within the agency. Team members learned about the desired clinical models, used an online survey targeting newly onboarded staff and students about their training experiences and collaborated with content experts (program supervisors and staff) to identify the desired competencies. The team then developed several character scenarios of youth accessing therapeutic services and workshopped them together until the scenarios mapped onto learning outcomes.

Impact

To date 7 VGS case scenarios, each consisting of 3 episodes (21 in total), requiring different levels of competency and complexity (novice, advanced beginner, and competent) were created. These scenarios are designed to help professionals recognize and respond to trauma in young clients while maintaining safety for themselves and the youth. Scenarios involve intersectionality where players are presented with a range of diverse clients (such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender) as part of the targeted learning. The next step of this project is to research the efficacy of such tools in the community setting for improving practice skills within the actual clinic environment.