

Daring to be different: teaching patient-centred care



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I have been a nurse educator for over 28 years and it was in 2011 that I had a realization that I needed to take a different approach in my teaching to show nurses how to best care for patients. I first came to this realization whilst teaching a class of first year nursing students perform dressing changes on a task trainer. The students seemed only fixated on the dressings and, as there was no person attached to the task trainer with feelings or a voice to express discomfort, no one seem to consider the patient. It was this that gave me the idea to employ a different type of role play.

CREATING SPECIAL CHARACTERS

Initially, I simply acted as the patient requiring nursing care. Whilst this engaged the students more, I found that they did not want to touch me as, in their eyes, I was still visibly their assessor. It seemed to make no difference in terms of communication and being empathetic to the person requiring the nursing care. Then, after watching the movie 'Mrs Doubt Fire', I realised that I had to hide whilst still performing role play. But how?

I sought out a USA company who would provide me with silicone masks. With these effective props, I could become someone else, allowing me to transform into that other person, a character with a particular voice and mannerism. Someone who would not just take on the role of a patient but could teach students via the character. For example, Mrs Muriel Moore, a retired Matron who, through her wisdom and life experiences, would gently guide students through the nursing care she was receiving.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CARE

Whilst the face masks were effective, I found that I needed to immerse in the character even more to allow students to undress, bathe, toilet me — fundamental aspects of nursing care required of them in real world of practice. I believed that if students could do these tasks in the safety net of the classroom, they would then gain a greater level of confidence in undertaking aspects of care that could be considered challenging.

The same company in the US that had manufactured the mask, built a full body suit, including breasts and genitalia. All of these parts were functional and could simulate urination and, via a stoma, secrete faeces. This entire concept was beautifully accepted by students. The characters I created were gentle, kind, vulnerable and quirky, they would serve not only as the students' confidant, but their facilitator, empowering them to believe in themselves. I also began to write and design the pedagogy around this, which now forms part of 3-day workshops teaching others the technique.

MASK-ED (KRS SIMULATION)

This high-fidelity simulation modality is called Mask-Ed (KRS Simulation): the Educator uses highly realistic silicone props to transform into another character with a carefully created back story. The KRS stands for Knowledge (the hidden teacher), Realistic (the high-fidelity props), Spontaneous (not scripted). The character responds to each situation ad hoc (Reid-Searl et al, 2012; McAllister et al, 2013)

Since 2011, I have delivered an extensive number of workshops across the world, teaching hundreds of individuals about the technique and have been the proud recipient of a number of prestigious awards at a National level and have been given research grants to explore the technique in detail and publish the findings. I now have higher degree students studying Mask-Ed. The technique is used in more than 45 universities or vocational training centres across and educators from around the world continue to refine and develop their characters. The technique continues to inspire students who transfer the empathy and concern that they have learnt from these characters into their every-day practice, thus making a difference in real patient care (Reid-Searl et al, 2014; Reid-Searl and O'Neill, 2017).

These characters form an excellent platform for learning and teaching and, personally, I realized that after all these years of daring to be different, being different is a great blessing.



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