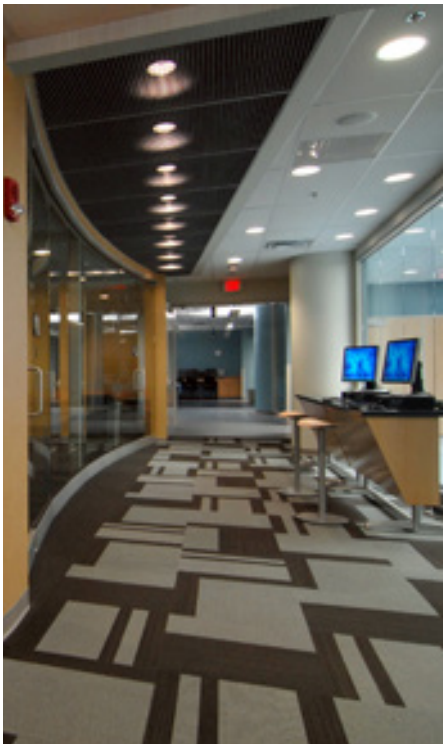
Study to Solutions Vol. IV: Medical Simulation - Designing for the Future

Hobbs+Black Healthcare Research Initiative



Despite accolades by the medical community, simulated training is sometimes seen as a limited training model due to the following: simulations often take place in procedural space, professionals taking part in simulated exercises are segregated by department, decentralized simulation practice lacks collaboration and opportunity for evaluation, and new technologies and rapid growth in medical technology makes expensive facilities quickly obsolete. In order to reap the maximum benefits from the cost and practice of medical simulation, health systems must make a commitment to this training method by designating flexible, thoughtfully designed space specifically designed for this purpose. Henry Ford's Center for Simulation Education and Research in Detroit, Michigan provides an example of how to avoid the recognized drawbacks of traditional medical simulation by deliberately designing to combat them.

In 2000, the Institute of Medicine published "To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System", substantiating the danger of fatal, preventable, medical errors in hospitals across the nation and naming them the 8th leading cause of death. The report named clinical simulation as the most promising solution to reducing preventable errors and brought national attention to the practice. One of the issues cited within this report was the increasing number of available procedures and their growing complexity. Traditionally, training relied on real-life, hands-on, cases that gave professionals learning opportunities. This approach basically left to chance the possibility that the right combination of circumstances would occur in order to give the medical professional an appropriate and well rounded experience-based education. This traditional teaching method, the apprenticeship model, could not possibly keep up with the rapidly expanding technology and procedure repertoire currently being developed.

Simulation, because of its more widespread use, is now beginning to bridge the gap between conditions professionals might experience in the field and those that are specifically designed for training purposes. As technologies and demand increases, simulations have become more realistic and varied. Due to these developments, healthcare systems need to create appropriate programs to best utilize the latest advancements in treatment and technology. Without careful design and proper implementation of simulation technologies the full potential of such advances will not be realized.

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Use of Valuable Procedural Space and Departmentalization

One of the major drawbacks of having professionals practice medical simulation is the use of procedural space for simulation purposes. If the same space designated for procedures is used for simulation, the time frame to engage in simulated training will be limited. Even more difficult is coordinating multiple departments to simultaneously participate in a simulation. If professionals or students are partaking in simulations within their respective discipline they receive limited exposure to those professionals who may also be involved or assisting in such a procedure. As an example, the traditional training model may have been to train nurses for a cardiac arrest while a physician group did the same, thereby both teams approaching a situation that they will eventually collaborate on, separately. This inefficient model does not allow medical professionals to gain insight from the one another, or effectively communicate with one another, as they would in a real scenario. Although departmental simulation provides a tactile experience for medical professionals and therefore increases the level of information retained, without collaboration, the scope of the learning experience is limited.

Health Systems around the country have found the most viable solution to these issues is to designate space specifically dedicated to simulated training within area accessible to all of the institution's medical professionals. For example, when Henry Ford Hospital transitioned from paper to electronic medical records, 12,000 square feet of usable space became available in the lower level of the main hospital. The Medical Education and Research Department was able to secure this space for a centralized Simulation Center allowing valuable procedural space to no longer be utilized for instructional purposes. The center creates a centralized, flexible education space with the ability to use present-day, cutting edge technology. This learning environment emphasizes collaboration amongst all professionals within the health system. The project was designed with the input of various professionals from a variety of departments so that it would meet the specific needs of many different users. "We interviewed nurses, doctors, surgeons, EMT's, and anesthesiologists, among others" states Ann Kenyon, AIA, LEED AP, Hobbs+Black Associates. "Every facet of the design had to be examined in order to make the space viable for all disciplines." By drawing different points of view from various professionals into one centralized location, the Simulation Center becomes a more dynamic space, which is extremely valuable for the users and the institution as a whole.

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Lack of Feedback and Interaction:

Another drawback to the practice of decentralized simulation is the difficulty in providing monitoring and feedback. With many professionals of many different disciplines working throughout a hospital, evaluators may have difficulty scheduling time to review and critique performance. Providing monitoring equipment without a centralized location is inefficient as it will only likely be used by the professionals in that department. Finally, if procedural space is used for simulation purposes, the accommodations for utilizing and storing simulation specific equipment is unlikely. This makes use, especially with highly complicated and technical simulations, difficult and cumbersome.

Creating one, centralized location for simulation practice presents the opportunity to better realize a health system's return on investment since the resources allocated in cutting edge technology will become cost effective with wide spread use of the training space and equipment. This approach also allows the opportunity to integrate monitoring and evaluation technology within the space, which is not possible when utilizing traditional procedural space. Details such as glass walls surrounding simulated OR's can accommodate large groups for simulation observation. The addition of classroom space allows instructors to provide pre and post simulation lessons and evaluation, to maximize retention of core skills. Henry Ford Health System uses its main classroom, equipped with an adjacent audio visual control room, for large group instruction. Here, recorded simulations can be played back and reviewed. The smaller Debrief Room is also designed with this capability. Group instruction can also be recorded in the Classroom and transmitted to other Henry Ford Health System satellites for system wide educational purposes. The clinical suites surround a Central Control Room which is used to monitor and proctor simulations. All of the surrounding simulation rooms are equipped with cameras and microphones that are connected back to the Central A/V Control Center for archival purposes. One way glass, between the control rooms and the simulated O.R.'s, E.R., I.C.U and patient rooms, allow instructors to proctor simulations out of view of participants. The proctor and medical professional are able to review and examine, step by step, each facet of the simulation and focus on any details that may require additional instruction. This data can be stored as part of medical professionals personnel file and becomes a valuable tool that can be used for retraining and retesting purposes.

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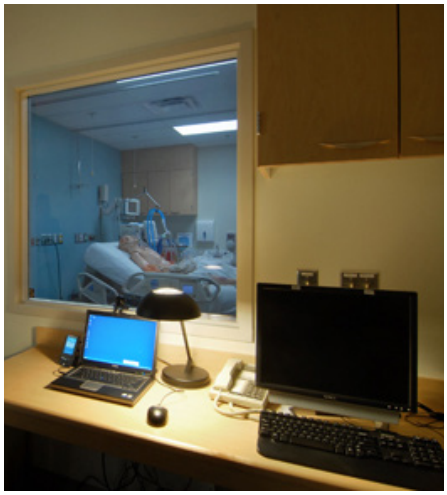

Staying on the Cutting Edge:

Simulation equipment is not only expensive but rapidly evolving. With regard to Centralized Simulation Centers, many health systems have concerns about investing in technology and building around equipment that will quickly become obsolete or creating a facility that does not have the capability to accommodate new technology that will be developed in the future. With rapidly evolving medical technology resulting in changing simulated procedures, and the sheer volume of simulation training, all healthcare facilities face a number of challenges when designing a Centralized Simulation Center.

Flexible space is an important design consideration. The design should accommodate a variety of programs, include space for future expansion and have the capability to accommodate future technologies. Due to the cost, many institutions are unable build all requirements into the project scope. The space should be designed and engineered to accommodate future expansion and new medical technologies, even those that are not currently part of the financial plan. This will alleviate the need for total renovation should new technology or additional funding become available. As innovations are rarely foreseen, additional space, or flexible space, can also be a great asset to a Simulation Center. If a health system is ready to invest in a designated space for Simulation practice, it is only practical to assume that growth and change are inevitable.

For example, the large, open, minimally invasive Simulation Lab at Henry Ford Health System allows for the interchange of up to 18 medical simulations. In addition, this space can be subdivided by a moveable, translucent glass wall that provides visual separation between the user groups, if needed. When designing their new Simulation Center, the design team intentionally selected a space which had the capability for future expansion. Discussion of the Phase 2 expansion included the addition of three patient exam rooms, two of which would be assigned to orthopedics and could serve as a training area for casting and splinting. The expansion will also include a research area, additional offices, storage space, and a break room for full time Simulation Center employees. The design team also discussed relocating the microsurgery or cadaver lab within the remaining available space.

An additional flexible O.R. was designed as the focal point of the space, in the hopes that a robotic operating system could eventually be installed in this location. When the health system acquired a new robot, the existing system was relocated to the Simulation Center prior to the official grand opening. The forethought of incorporating such a space into the design, will allow surgeons to train on the fastest growing $1 billion dollar segment of the medical device industry. In addition, further training

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on such devices will ultimately benefit patients as the robotic system is known for its precise, tremor free, and less invasive use of surgical implements, which vastly reduces pain and recovery time. Robots can also benefit surgeons as they often reduce physical stress and exposure to x-rays.

As simulation evolves and becomes an accepted practice, it will most likely be used not only for educational purposes, but also for continuing evaluation. Instead of paper tests, which explore fact based knowledge and neglect to address how well that knowledge is put into practice, healthcare professionals could be tested in a simulation center where their combined knowledge and skills are the central focus. Already, residency review committees are using simulation-based tests to determine competency. As a result of the pressure on residents to perform well on tests and reviews using simulations, residents have begun to seek out Health Systems that can offer the latest simulation technologies to better prepare themselves for real world situations. Many health systems have already seen that providing such educational amenities, helps to attract and retain top professionals within the medical community. Another inevitable fate of simulation, stemming from its new found notoriety in the medical community, is growth and increased innovation. New technologies are bound to arise at a rapid pace and it is in the best interest of every medical institution to determine how these technologies can be incorporated into holistic medical training and eventually medical practice. This is a shared mission of the medical community, and the community at large, as each of us benefits from successful medical practice.

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A Research Initiative by Hobbs+Black Associates, Inc. for the use and knowledge of healthcare providers. For more information on this subject or other Hobbs+Black Study to Solutions publications please contact Sue Stevanovic at 734.663.4189 or sstevanovic@hobbs-black.com

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