

SIMULATION OF PATIENT CAREGIVER COUNSELING IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE
PATHOLOGY

by

Leigh Renae Harper

A Senior Honors Project Presented to the

Honors College

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for

Graduation with Honors

by

Leigh Renae Harper

Greenville, NC

May, 2019

Approved by:

Allyson Turnage

Communication Sciences and Disorders Department, College of Allied Health Sciences

Abstract

The creative endeavor I am undertaking as part of my Signature Honors Research Project is concerned with creating a useful and sustainable simulation experience for students in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department. More specifically, my project utilizes Mursion simulation technology to facilitate an experience between a student, acting as a Speech-Language Pathologist, and an avatar, acting as the parent of a child diagnosed with a language delay. The purpose of this project is to allow students the most realistic environment in which to practice their clinical conferencing skills prior to entering the professional world.

There are several steps in my investigation. First, I designed a case history of the “patient” being discussed and subsequently completed a detailed scenario for the Mursion simulation to follow, including proper reactions of the avatar to certain clinician responses. Following this step, I recruited nine participants to take part in my study, all of whom are seniors in the Speech and Hearing Sciences program at East Carolina University. My mentor and I met with the group of participating students and provided them with the aforementioned patient case history along with proper training on how to conduct a parent-therapist conference under various conditions.

The next step in my study was for the participants to take place in the actual simulation experience. Each simulation will be video recorded for the purpose of reflection. These videos will be shared among the group at a debriefing session in order to discuss positive experiences, ways to improve clinical skills, overall learning outcomes, and thoughts regarding how Mursion technology may be beneficial on a wider scale for utilization by the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department.

The intention of my work is to provide students with a simulation opportunity that is not currently available to them in the belief that “practice makes perfect.” Conferencing with the

parent of a child can be difficult, uncomfortable, and nerve wracking for a graduate student or a new clinician. It is my hope that being given the opportunity to simply practice this skill and work towards honing this ability in a pressure-free environment prior to entering the work force will increase the confidence and competence level of our graduating clinicians.

Statement

I conducted this project to enhance the learning experience of undergraduate and graduate students at ECU, and to better prepare them for the daily work of Speech-Language Pathologists. My project was conducted using Mursion technology, and I created scripts for training consistent with counseling the parent of a child who has an expressive language delay. Prior to my project, this technology was not available for CSDI students. Following the completion of my project, the CSDI department made the decision to apply for Educational Technology funding in order to implement Mursion training in both the undergraduate and graduate curriculums.

Background

Mursion is an interactive simulation consisting of two parties: the participant, in this case a student, and the “parent” of a patient who is displayed on the video screen. The simulated parent will respond to the participant’s actions according to a script, which I am creating. This provides the student with the most realistic training experience possible without interacting with actual parents in a clinic setting. Lack of experience with counseling parents prior to graduate school or even after graduate school is a huge issue in our field, whether it be because the student has not advanced in the program far enough to do so or simply because there are so many different aspects to observe. Privacy and insurance also play a role in lack of exposure of undergraduate students to real patients and their guardians. Many students say they feel unprepared going into clinical work because of lack of exposure, and previously there was not

much to be done to help this. However, using simulation technology may provide a solution to this issue.

Project Conclusion and Further Directions

Following the completion of the Mursion simulation sessions, both groups of participants met together for a formal debriefing session, where they were asked a series of questions to encourage them to share their overall experience with Mursion. This allowed my mentor and myself to paint a picture of if and how Mursion could be beneficial to the students in our department on a larger scale.

Questions included the participants favorite and least favorite thing about the simulation experience, general feedback, and how they personally felt Mursion technology could be most useful to the CSDI department. Feedback gathered was overwhelmingly positive, including how realistic and adaptive the technology was, how the session provided good insight as to how an actual therapy session might be, and as one student said, “this isn’t something we can really learn in graduate school, we need the real experience.” Participants also remarked that they felt this opportunity would be a great addition to both the undergraduate or graduate program.

After watching participants complete the simulation experience and hearing their positive feedback, it was clear that this project had an impact on the participants. Therefore, the CSDI Department made the decision to submit a proposal to utilize Educational Technology funds to implement Mursion in both the undergraduate and graduate curriculums. I am extremely excited to have created something both useful and sustainable for my department and look forward to seeing the positive impact that practicing clinical skills with Mursion technology has on our future graduates.

Appendix

1. Parent-Therapist Conference Simulation form, completed for Mursion
2. Student Mursion video clip