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Redefining Clinical Experiences during a Pandemic: The Use of Standardized Patients in a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for nursing students, including those students in Drexel University's psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner program. Clinical education is a critical aspect of the learning process. Not only does it allow the student to apply new learning to clinical scenarios, it also allows clinical nursing experts to observe and critique the learner, assuring the quality of program graduates. With many hospitals and office-based practices preventing students from participating in learning activities in their facilities, redesigning the delivery of clinical education was essential. This involved hiring professional actors to assume the role of patients, whom the faculty provided extensive education on disease-specific diagnostic criteria. The actors then studied the actual way a patient with a particular disorder may present. The psychiatric evaluations were conducted using Zoom. Because the sessions were recorded, the clinical faculty were able to review and critique the student's performance. Further, students were able to review their own recordings, allowing them to engage in self-reflection and personal critique. The attainment of course learning outcomes was confirmed and students provided favorable feedback regarding the experience.

Biography:

Kimberly Garcia is an assistant clinical professor and the director of the psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner program at Drexel University. She completed her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at Columbia University, New York City. She received her BSN, MSN in nursing education and post-master's certificate in family nurse practitioner studies from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. Her post-master's certificate in psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner studies was completed at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She is a DNP-to-PhD student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Garcia is board-certified as a family, gerontological and psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner.