

## Simulation for Teaching Communication and Leadership Skills.

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## Abstract

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### BACKGROUND

Women are under-represented in academic leadership despite growing numbers of female medical students. Communication as a component of leadership is comprised of observable behaviours, teachable to both sexes using simulation. Polarity management uses breathing metaphorically to solve complex problems with non-binary solutions. Just as inspiration and expiration cycle together as equally important parts of breathing, traditional male and female communications are modifiable polarities in which simulation education can produce a unisex ideal. The Tuckamore Simulation Research Collaborative (TSRC) has published clinical communication scenarios for learners. Leadership skills may be taught in a similar way.

### METHODS

One traditionally associates simulation with computerized human mannequins. However hybrid simulation and role-play are effective tools for teaching communication and teamwork when sound pedagogy is used alongside learning objectives that are appropriate for students' skill levels. The TSRC has developed a suite of simulation-based communication scenarios for teaching how to manage difficult patient encounters and for breaking bad news. A similar approach may be used to teach leadership skills.

### DISCUSSION

Good leadership is important when managing multiple traumas, breaking bad news or in difficult patient encounters. It depends on effective communication, which can be deconstructed into observable verbal and non-verbal behaviours that are modifiable with a simulation-based curriculum.

The business literature describes female communication behaviours that may be antithetical to leadership. Male leaders may traditionally communicate successfully in the boardroom, but those skills may not apply to difficult patient encounters or Emergency Department

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resuscitation crises. As informed by Polarity management, simulation can teach successful communication and leadership strategies to both sexes. Female students' leadership skills may improve if under-confident behaviours are identified and modified. Male students may become better leaders if they are taught collaboration and listening skills. Good leadership should be gender-neutral.

CONCLUSIONS

Leadership and communication skills are necessary in many clinical settings. The observable behaviours that comprise them may be taught using simulation in the context of Polarity management. While applicable to both sexes, this may be particularly pertinent to women who mentor future academic leaders.



**MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY**

**Female Leadership in Medicine and the Role for Simulation Education**

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**BACKGROUND**

Over the last several decades the number of women practicing medicine has been increasing in countries throughout the world. In 1929 almost half of all new medical graduates in Canada were female, compared to only 6% in 1959 [1]. In 2014 the Association of American Medical Colleges indicated 47% of American medical students were female [2]. This change in demographics has implications for the profession and how we educate medical students. These implications include gender differences in communication and leadership. Awareness of these subtle differences in styles and behaviors can help educators provide more learner specific education. This ensures physicians of the future are optimally prepared to take on leadership roles in the clinical setting. Women are under-represented in academic leadership, including medicine. Communication as a component of leadership is comprised of observable behaviors, teachable to both sexes using simulation. Polarity management uses leading and lagging to solve complex problems with non-binary solutions. Just as inspiration and repetition cycle together as equally important parts of teaching, traditional male and female communication are modifiable patterns in which simulation education can produce a vision ideal. The Tuckamore Simulation Research Collaborative (TSRC) has published numerous clinical scenarios for learners. Simulation based medical education often used to promote and teach procedural skills can also be used to teach essential communication and leadership skills required to coordinate a patient care.

**METHODS**



Figure 1. Methods for creation of simulation based case scenario

**DISCUSSION**

Although not always associated with the clinical setting, good leadership skills are a requirement of a good physician, especially those that work in the chaos of the emergency department. Good leadership is important when managing multiple trauma, breaking bad news or in difficult patient encounters. It depends on effective communication, which can be deconstructed into observable verbal and non-verbal behaviors that are modifiable with a simulation-based curriculum. The business literature female communication behaviors that are antithetical to leadership. Male leaders may traditionally communicate successfully in the boardroom, but these skills may not apply to difficult patient encounters or Emergency Department resuscitation crises. As informed by Polarity management, simulation can teach successful communication and leadership strategies to both sexes. Female students' leadership skills may improve if under-confident behaviors are identified and modified. Male students may become better leaders if they are taught collaboration and listening skills. Good leadership should be gender-neutral.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Create a simulation based case scenario aiming to address discrepancies between male and female in leadership roles in medicine.
- Increase faculty and staff emergency department trauma care.

**RESULTS**

A simulation case was developed by the authors with a goal of learners developing leadership skills for the medical field regardless of gender. The case scenario proceeds through the following use-timeline.



Figure 2. Case scenario designed to establish leadership skills and improve communication

**GOT AN IDEA FOR A SIMULATION? WANT TO BE A MENTOR?**

Contact for The Tuckamore Simulation Research Collaborative (TSRC)



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