

Comparison of UCF COM Virtual Family Simulation Experience or Reading Evidence-Based Medicine Article as a Learning Tool

Kristine Smith ¹, Alina Kravtsova ¹, Juan C. Cendán ², Michael Eakins

¹. University of Central Florida College of Medicine ². Medical Education and Simulation, University of Central Florida College of Medicine, Orlando, USA ³.

✉ **Corresponding author:** Kristine Smith, kristine.smith@knights.ucf.edu

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Abstract

The Virtual Family is a longitudinal educational simulation program to be integrated into the UCF COM four year curriculum. Beginning in their first year, medical students will be responsible for the care and management of a five member virtual patient family who will develop several conditions over time. This study focuses on one case for the Mom who is at high risk for breast cancer and needs a proper treatment plan. The main goal was to test usability of the simulation on UCF COM medical students and to compare it to a traditional reading assignment related to the management of high risk breast cancer patients. In order to measure the two methodologies, researchers compared student scores on pre and post examinations. Students were randomly assigned to one of two groups; Virtual Family or Article, and further divided into a post-test scheduled for either three or seven days. While the results of the study were not significant most likely due to small sample size, the overall response from the student population was positive. The majority of the participants preferred using Virtual Family over traditional evidence based medicine article. The usability survey illustrates the highlights of the program as identified by participants. Overall the affect of this study will help future researchers get closer to answering when and how to implement educational technologies like Virtual Family into existing medical school curricula.

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