

Letter from the STORM Editorial Board

Simulation Operations Specialist Training: Need of the Hour

The use of technology in healthcare simulation has been rapidly evolving. Manikins and task trainers are becoming increasingly sophisticated both in physical characteristics and software. The advent of augmented and virtual reality has introduced an additional level of sophistication. Learning management systems are now routinely used to maintain data in simulation centers with specific requirements for storing and using audiovisual data. Not only do Simulation Operations Specialists (SOS) need to adapt to manage this exponential increase in responsibility, but they are also now given additional responsibilities as educators in many centers.



There are clear-cut education streams for simulation faculty and educators to enhance their knowledge and skills through short courses, certification programs, master's programs and even doctorates. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for SimOps specialists. A quick Google search for "healthcare simulation operations" returned only a handful of results, most associated with Certified Healthcare Simulation Operations Specialist certification through the Society for Simulation in Healthcare. In addition, the available courses are short, only lasting a few days.

The limited opportunities for SOSs force simulation institutions to provide their technical support teams with training not only to do their jobs well, but also to offer avenues for career progression. This need would be fulfilled by formal training programs that provide a recognized qualification. An offline postgraduate simulation operations technology course leading to a diploma has been developed in India under the aegis of JeevaRaksha, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) devoted to healthcare education, particularly for emergency management skills. To develop the course, senior healthcare educators nationally were invited to be part of the curriculum committee. Initially, the course structure was discussed at an in-person 2-day meeting, followed by virtual meetings to refine it in accordance with local regulations. The course is open to undergraduate students from science backgrounds. The course is 40 credits and lasts one year, with nine months of formal training and three months of internship.

JeevaRaksha is empowered to enter into Memoranda of Understanding with national teaching institutions that have active simulation centers, allowing these centers to offer the course. This ensures the presence of the program across the entire country, offering applicants a broad selection of centers to choose from. It is hoped that this will result in a group of well-trained SOSs with the skills needed to be a part of an expert simulation team.

The simulation world needs to recognize and support the needs of our technical support teams and to step up in providing solutions. This model could guide other countries and institutions to develop similar programs, addressing the significant gap in simulation education. A potential way forward could be to propose a summit or dedicated committee focused on developing and standardizing training criteria for simulation operations competencies. International simulation societies need to take the lead addressing this issue.

The CHSOS blueprint is a good starting point for developing the simulation operation curriculum but needs to be adapted to local needs. This would upskill a large group of technicians who have previously been informally trained, thereby improving the quality of simulation education.

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