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“The character rests heavily within me” drama students as standardized patients in simulated-base learning

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Standardized patient (SP) simulation has proven effective in enhancing nursing students' competencies necessary for mental health practice. A deeper exploration of the process from the perspective of the SP is required to enrich the authenticity of these learning experiences. The aim of this article is therefore to explore and describe the experiences of 11 drama students engaged in mental health simulations for nursing students, including how it affected them. A qualitative approach was taken and data were gathered using various techniques. Content analysis revealed that these SPs negotiated three roles during this interdisciplinary learning experience, namely of a facilitator of learning, a drama student and the person within. The drama students participating in this study revealed a sense of responsibility towards facilitating learning for the nursing students and made invaluable contributions in this regard. The study provided valuable insight into the world of an SP for the enrichment of future simulated practice learning endeavors and the professional development of all involved in the process. Feedback to the nursing students and their educators on their personal experiences during the simulation was found to be crucial in increasing understanding of nurse-patient interaction from the perspective of a patient with a mental health issue, thus enhancing future practice. Having been alerted to the personal investment required and possible risks related to character portrayal of a patient with a mental health issue, however, the nurse educators are challenged to give careful consideration to the welfare of the SPs in future endeavors.

Biography

Amanda Jacobs is currently employed by the University of the Free State, South Africa, as a lecturer of Child Psychiatric Nursing at the School of Nursing. She has 5 years' experience of Standardized Patient Simulation as a learning strategy. Amanda holds a Master degree in Child Psychiatric Nursing and is currently busy with PhD studies.

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