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Mind the gap: bridging the chasm in training advanced practice nurses and midwives in practical and emotional skills with guiding models

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Advanced Practice Nurses and Midwives face a number of diverse challenges in their practices that stretch the abilities of universities to effectively train them. Traditionally the focus of APRN/CNM programs has been on acquiring the technical and physical skills necessary for exams and diagnostics through first a didactic component followed with time spent in clinical practice. Unfortunately, with the lack of clinical placement sites and/or the unwillingness to let students engage with the “difficult” or “complex” patient, students do not receive the experiences needed to become professionally competent. In the graduate WHNP/CNM curriculum at Emory University’s SON we have implemented a guiding model program that provides students a safe environment in which to experience simulated patients with unique needs. These models are specifically trained to teach health care providers how to perform clinical breast and pelvic exams. These include physically placing speculums to identify the cervix and performing bimanual examinations. The guided model lead the students through scenarios that they would not otherwise encounter. Complicated and nuanced exams such as sexual assault with evidence collection, STDs, teen pregnancy, elder abuse, intimate partner violence and other difficult discussions can be experienced by the student, within a controlled and safe environment for both the student and the patient. This physical and emotional training produces students that are more culturally competent and socially aware of the nuances of patient encounters. Preceptor and student feedback was universally positive, with special emphasis on the confidence that the use of guided models gave to APRN students.

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