

FSU medical students tested by well-rehearsed 'patients'

Beth Strack and Kenrick Thomas, YourNews contributor 9:08 a.m. ET Feb. 8, 2017



(Photo: Sandy Stevens)

STUART — A group of people trained to simulate illnesses traveled from Tallahassee to the Florida State University College of Medicine Fort Pierce Regional Campus area to put 13 third-year medical students through a rigorous practical exam.

Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) Clinic generously donated its site in Stuart for this testing. Dr. Howard Voss, medical director of the VIM clinic, is a clinical professor for the FSU College of Medicine and teaches a student for a year-long course every academic year.

“The partnerships we have with agencies like the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic greatly enhance our ability to provide outstanding educational opportunities for our students,” said Juliette Lomax-Homier, M.D., dean of the Fort Pierce regional campus.

Students performed a series of medical history and physical exams on three “standardized patients.” These community members are hired to portray specific medical and psychosocial problems for the students’ practice and evaluation. They portray an actual patient by accurately and consistently simulating an illness or other physical finding. Unlike real patients, they are trained to provide constructive feedback to students about their communication skills.

“This practical exam is just one part of our patient centered curriculum that gives our graduates exemplary skills as they enter their residency program,” Lomax-Homier said.



Jennifer Riche' takes her practical exam. (Photo: Beth Stracks)

Medical school faculty members provided feedback on clinical skills. These exams were completed in rooms equipped with cameras and microphones that send a wireless signal to laptops in another room. Four of the regional campus’s nine clerkship directors were stationed at those computers, watching and listening to the student’s performance. Participating in the grading were Heidi McNaney-Flint, M.D., clerkship director for obstetrics/gynecology; Michael Jampol, M.D., clerkship director for pediatrics; Bill Hood, M.D., clerkship director for internal medicine; and Johann Santa-Eulalia, M.D., informatics curriculum director.

“In the real world you need to see an effective number of patients. It’s their first experience being in a time restraint situation. They will learn to use their knowledge and provide the best care,” Voss said.

Voss said he was gratified that VIM was able to facilitate FSU College of Medicine practical exam. He mentioned that it’s his responsibility to help the next generation.

“I devoted part of my medical career to teaching. The first part of the Hippocratic Oath says it’s our obligation to teach those who come after us,” he said.

In addition to Fort Pierce, the staff of the Clinical Learning Center will travel to College of Medicine regional campuses in Pensacola, Orlando, Sarasota and Daytona Beach, as well as the Immokalee rural site.

The VIM Clinic provides free comprehensive medical care to uninsured Martin County residents. Patients must have an income within 200 percent of the federal poverty level to qualify. VIM is staff with more than 100 volunteers and a small paid staff. It’s a self-funded nonprofit organization that’s been in existence for 21 years. For additional information, call 772-463-4128 or visit vimclinic.net (<http://vimclinic.net>).

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