



VA Central Iowa Showcases Simulation for National Simulation Week

By Ashley Williams, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, Nurse Educator, VA Central Iowa HealthCare System



Nurse Educator, Ashley Williams, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, poses with her simulation set-up at an open house available to all staff members at VA Central Iowa.

As a key contributor to strengthening the Veteran Health Administration's (VHA) network of simulation, VA Central Iowa Healthcare System (VACIHCS) participated in National Simulation Week, which took place September 18-22, 2023. The theme this year was "Be a Champion of Your Success Story." Overcoming challenges stemming from the pandemic and significant staff changes that had previously depleted their simulation program, VACIHCS has been diligently rebuilding its foundation. The site celebrated their progress with a series of engaging events during this year's National Simulation Week.

On Tuesday, September 19, the VACIHCS team orchestrated a challenging Safe Patient Handling and Mobility (SPHM) escape room. This experience required participants to solve a series of puzzles to unlock their SPHM equipment. After accessing the equipment, they ventured into three separate rooms where they mastered using the equipment to safely transfer patients in diverse scenarios. As they advanced through each scenario, participants collected puzzle pieces that would ultimately lead to their triumphant escape from the room.

On Wednesday, September 20, the facility partnered with local hospitals for a National Disaster Management System simulation scenario. This collaborative effort saw VACIHCS admitting five simulated patients, while the emergency department staff skillfully handled the process of settling both civilian and Veteran patients. This exercise provided an opportunity to test local emergency response processes and protocols. Following the scenario, the simulation coordinator facilitated a debriefing session with the emergency department staff, subsequently presenting key insights to the executive leadership team. This dynamic simulation event created reflective discussions regarding how each department can elevate their preparedness for real-life local or national emergencies.

The week ended on Thursday, September 21 with the Learning Service Department hosting an open house, which featured an array of simulation equipment, a comprehensive list of created simulation scenarios for training, two lifelike manikins, and an overview of the program's objectives. Open to all facility employees, this event allowed staff members to witness the dedication and hard work that the Simulation Department devoted to the program over the past several months. The highlight of the day was a demonstration by Simman 3G, an advanced simulation manikin affectionately known as "Henry." Staff members marveled as Henry showcased his incredible capabilities, including blinking, changing cardiac rhythms, and even engaging in interactive conversations.

VACIHCS not only commemorated National Simulation Week with great success but also eagerly anticipates the ongoing growth and development of its simulation program. This story stands as a testament to their commitment to excellence in health care simulation.



Staff at VA Central Iowa participate in the National Disaster Management System simulation scenarios. The staff are triaging a victim who appears to have a fractured humerus. Pictured from left to right: Melissa Huttenstine, RN; Dr. Thomas Green, DO, MMM