

# Chapter 10

## Simulated Learning Environments to Prepare for Clinical Placements: Transition to Placement (T2P)

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Students commencing clinical placements often have difficulty applying their knowledge to produce meaningful clinical interactions. Patient-centred simulation can provide a bridge to clinical practice but can be expensive. This chapter describes the development and evaluation of a simulated environment integrating patient-centred simulation with an online adaptive learning platform to assist students to transition from classroom to placement. Student confidence increased significantly from pre- to post-simulation in all 12 areas that were surveyed from 3.4/6 (2.9–4.2) to 3.9/6 (3.7–4.5). Ninety-one percent of students felt better prepared for placement. The activity was not assessable and students rated this aspect highly for engagement and efficacy of learning. Student marks on their subsequent clinical placement were significantly higher for professional behavior, communication, and evidence-based practice compared with previous cohorts of students who had not undertaken a similar program.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Work integrated learning is a mandatory component of physiotherapy education and primarily occurs during clinical placements where students undertake live patient care in a real-life setting. There are increasing numbers of physiotherapists being trained and there are often not sufficient clinical placements to meet the placement needs. Simulated learning environments and simulation-based learning are being used in several ways to address this shortage. Simulation-based learning has been used to either replace or supplement clinical placement time thereby reducing the demand on limited placement capacity. An example of how simulated learning environments can benefit student preparation for practice is described in detail in this chapter. The authors contend that students who are better prepared beforehand are more productive when they reach a clinical placement, thereby making them more attractive to the placement provider and perceived as less of a burden by clinical educators and clinical placement facilities.

## **BACKGROUND: THE ROLE OF CLINICAL PLACEMENTS**

In Australia, physiotherapy is a registered profession under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). To become qualified and registrable, an individual must undertake physiotherapy studies within a university-based program of physiotherapy studies accredited by the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC). The APC undertakes the task of accrediting entry-level physiotherapy programs on behalf of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia which is supported by AHPRA.

The enormous growth in Physiotherapy programs in Australia is illustrated by an increase from six entry-level physiotherapy programs in 1998 to 29 in 2017. Each physiotherapy program has at its core, a curriculum reflective of contemporary Western physiotherapy. Integral to the curricula are clinical placements wherein physiotherapy students, apply their knowledge and skills in clinical settings under the supervision of registered physiotherapists. Typically such placements are of five weeks duration (or in multiples of five weeks) across a range of areas of practice either incorporated into the program structure such that a placement immediately follows a period of theoretical and practical learning (integrated model); or follow directly after each other once the bulk of theoretical and practical learning has been completed (immersive model). Each model has its benefits and challenges but these placements are required to include exposure to people of all ages in a range of specified areas of practice (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2015).

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