

Baptist Simulation Center uses high-tech tools to help staff learn, sharpen skills

By Toby Sells

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A package delivery driver was hit by a car last week. His heart stopped at the scene.

He was brought to Baptist Memorial Hospital-Memphis, where he was shocked back to life with a defibrillator. His condition finally stabilized, but he needed an overnight stay in the emergency room.

Most of that really didn't happen. The patient's job and the car accident were made up and the "patient" wasn't a real person, but rather a pricey, high-tech simulator.

The defibrillator shocks, however, were very real — part of a training regimen designed to help medical professionals sharpen their skills.

The simulator, one of five at Baptist's new Simulation Center, is a SimMan 3G mannequin, a completely wireless, life-sized human model designed to mimic the symptoms of just about any injury or ailment that would befall a real person.

The mannequins can cough, cry, vomit, blink, urinate, talk, sweat, show a pulse, respond to medications, have overdoses and seizures and do just about anything else a real patient can do.

The 3,600-square-foot Simulation Center, scheduled to open May 13, will have five patient rooms equipped to simulate nearly every patient service area in the hospital — childbirth, pediatrics, critical care, general medical and emergency.

The center was established with an \$815,000 grant from the Baptist Foundation, with the rest funded by the hospital. The total cost of the project was not disclosed.

Everything about the center, besides the mannequins, is real, including the room size and the medical equipment and supplies. So, when Baptist's new nurses are training or its veterans are sharpening their skills, they are not allowed to use the "p" word.

" 'Pretend' is a word we don't use in here," said Judy Bedard, Baptist's director of staff development and a registered nurse. "We want you to simulate everything."

Bedard said Baptist began training on mannequins in 2004, but that the new simulation center is a major step forward in that sort of training.

"There is just a lot of complexity now in just taking care of the basic situations and equipment and medications," she said.

The Medical Education and Research Institute has been using simulators for two years, said Elizabeth Ostric, its executive director.

"We see how much (the simulators) help students at every level, whether you're an experienced caregiver or one who is learning to become a caregiver," Ostric said. "We see that allowing people to demonstrate their competence increases their confidence."

The institute teaches simulated courses on advanced life support, restricted airways and many courses for paramedics in Shelby County.

Baptist's Bedard said simulators have been around for about 10 years and have been used for years by the military and in academia, but have just recently caught on in hospital settings.

She said each of the hospital's new high-tech mannequins cost about \$65,000.

"But what they provide in the learning environment, they're worth much more than that," she said.

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