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Title: Vision simulation as an educational experience

Abstract:

Background/purpose:

Disability simulation devices provide an opportunity for others to experience a disability first hand. This can provide real life experiences of the abilities and needs associated with each simulated disorder. There are a variety of different simulation devices available. For the focus of this study, simulation goggles were used to portray a variety of different eye conditions and a GERT suit used to simulate older age. Simulation exercises are criticised by disability studies academics who argue that the simulation is inauthentic and potentially harmful; however, vision simulation has consistently been used as part of training rehabilitation professionals, and simulation is increasingly used as a critical component in clinical training.

This study aimed to critically explore the issues arising around vision simulation and to ask the question: What are the learning outcomes of tertiary students after an education workshop with the simulators? We hoped that the answer to this question would help to understand whether vision simulation was justified as an educational experience.

Method: Mixed methods

Stage one: five stakeholders in the visual impairment and disability awareness community were interviewed to gather critical perspectives and to get pragmatic advice on workshop design.

Stage two: A low vision workshop was conducted with 27 tertiary students using simulation equipment for a variety of activities. The Social Responsibility Scale for Blindness was used before and after the workshop. The debriefing discussion was recorded and analysed.

Results: There was a change in the pre and post SRSB results, but these were not statistically significant. The workshops led to significant discussion and learning, both on the part of the students and the experts in visual impairment. The conclusion was that a framework for cultural competence can be used to understand how vision simulation can be used as part of an educational experience.