

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Active since: 2013



Co-Director's:

Mary Ellen Elias, MSN RN

Specialties: Leadership, Patient Safety & Quality Improvement, Critical Care

Contact information MaryEllen.Elias@va.gov

Mary Ellen Elias, MSN RN is the Simulation Coordinator at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) and the Co-Director of Advanced Interprofessional Fellowship in Clinical Simulation. She is adjunct faculty at Waynesburg University in the undergraduate nursing program where she reviewed and updated the Nursing Policy, Quality and Patient Safety curriculum to incorporate best practice and more active learning technologies. Ms. Elias has been instrumental in expanding the simulation program at VAPHS into non-traditional domains including behavioral health and crisis management. She has presented at international, national and local conferences on the use of simulation, the use of standardized patients in system process improvement, and staff education and development. In 2018 Ms. Elias received the 2017 Under Secretary for Health Excellence in Clinical Simulation Training, Education, and Research Champion Award.

Lillian Emlet, MD, MS, CHSE

Specialties: Critical Care Medicine, Emergency Medicine

Contact information Lillian.Emlet@va.gov

Lillian Emlet has served since 2010 as the Associate Program Director of the Internal Medicine-Critical Care Medicine fellowship of the MCCTP (Multidisciplinary Critical Care Training Program) at our academic affiliate, UPMC, in addition to serving since 2019 as the Co-Director of the VA Interprofessional Advanced Fellowship in Clinical Simulation. Her areas of interest and expertise are in difficult airway management, rapid response interprofessional team training, and palliative end-of-life communication skills. Dr. Emlet is a VitalTalk trained Senior Faculty and teaches empathic communication skills for healthcare providers to deliver serious news, determine goals of care, and navigate conflict.

Description of Site:

VA Pittsburgh's 4400 sq ft simulation center is designed to replicate VAPHS hospital facilities, including an operating room, inpatient rooms, and outpatient procedure room, while also being flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of simulations. Current simulation programs focus on procedural skills, clinical team training, communication skills (Second Victim peer support training, suicide prevention), highly detailed procedural/ surgical skills (virtual reality trainers cataract surgery EyeSI, bronchoscopy BronchMentor, GI endoscopy GIMentor). Our simulations range from individual procedural skills (nursing, physician, RT), team performance (rapid response teams), system performance (Stroke activation, Covid respiratory arrest, Ebola readiness, disaster drill), in-situ (mock code), and root cause analysis (RCA). The VA Pittsburgh Simulation Center includes a sophisticated audiovisual system with multiple cameras, speakers, and microphones in each room which can be controlled from the central Control Room or by faculty in the room. We have an excellent relationship with our University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine affiliate's standardized patient (SP) program and utilize SPs in our ultrasound

training, communication skills, and emergence delirium simulation courses. We have developed simulations that are patient-facing (naloxone administration for Veteran's and public), staff employee-focused (Second Victim peer support training, EMS cleaning procedures), clinical teams (multiple specialties), new employee orientation (nursing transition to practice programs), and academic affiliate trainees (nursing, health professions trainees from a variety of specialties). Our simulation fellows have reciprocal access to the University of Pittsburgh/UPMC multi-specialty medical education meetings, conferences, and clinician-educator experts.

Selected Alumni:

Marianne Burda, MD, ACOS-E VA Chillicothe

Arshia Ashjaei, DDS, University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine

José Pérez IV, MFA, BFA, Simulation Educator, VAPHS

Selected Projects/Accomplishments:

Validation of Airway Hemorrhage Simulation Scenarios (Arshia Ashjaie DDS)

Esophageal Hemorrhage Interprofessional Team Training (Jorge Lara-Gutierrez MD)

Ethics Committee Training (Marianne Burda MD/ Kathy Carter MSN RN)

Mock Deposition Simulation Training (Deanna Blisard MD)

Garage Emergency Evacuation (Dan Wolf MSc)

Veteran Facing Naloxone Training (Suzanne Symons MSW/ Ashley Modany PharmD)

Ebola and Covid Readiness Training

System Integration/ Analysis Projects

Mock Stroke System Training (NIH stroke scale/ system test)

Application Information:



