

# Physical Examination Class Simulates the Nurse-Patient Body Boundaries Interaction

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Teacher Hsieh Mei-Lin(center) introduces a Standardized Patient, teaching students the skills for physical examination as well as the need to respect the patient.

In the Declaration of Lisbon on the Rights of the Patient, the World Medical Association claimed that patients had the right to high-quality medical care and that the physical examination had to be the main reference in making a diagnosis in order for that to happen. The twenty-fourth article of the fourth chapter of the Nursing Personnel Act states that the responsibilities of a nurse include a nursing assessment of health problems, which implies that all nursing personnel should know how to conduct a physical examination (Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China, 2018).

Today, many medical personnel are obliged to consider the perspective of a patient. Although the patient should have the right to be respected by medical personnel, for the sake of treatment, the medical institution should notify the patient of his or her responsibilities, such as providing information about personal health for an accurate diagnosis and conceding parts of his or her bodily privacy to cooperate with the physical examination. Therefore, it is imperative for medical personnel to explain the examination process in detail to maintain professionalism and respect for the patient.



As the privacy and independence of a patient is taken more into consideration, we teachers in the medical field face the challenge to discuss such a topic with our students, especially during training for physical examination. Some procedures require revealing parts of the body hidden under clothing to accurately see, hear, and touch for an accurate diagnosis. To practice preserving the independence of a patient, students take turns roleplaying as the patient and performing procedures, such as monitoring vital signs, performing intramuscular injections, evaluating the body, and more. We also practice on standardized patients (also known as SP) for further practice.

Some students would reflect to me like “Why can’t we perform examinations with clothes on?” or “I feel very uncomfortable being examined by my peers!” However, it is from these very experiences to perform as a patient that students are able to truly relate to the patients. For example, you might ask questions too fast and move on to the next question before the patient has time to react; or when you ask the patient to inhale and exhale fast, the patient may become short of breath; when you handle the patient’s body with too much force, the patient may feel uncomfortable, etc. Additionally, if you examined the heart, the lungs, and the abdomen while the patient was fully clothed, you would not be able to accurately locate inner organs.

Because physical examination cannot be simply taught through lectures, videos, or demonstrations, hands-on practice is a vital part of the training process. Especially when students have just begun training and have not been taught medical protocol, teachers need to respect the students’ privacy and feelings. We must ask for the students’ consent when they roleplay as patients and appropriately cover with clothes to protect privacy. We must perform procedures calmly and skillfully with appropriate force. While performing physical examinations, one must frequently monitor the patient’s facial expression and posture for any signs of discomfort.

The Nursing Department of Tzu Chi University has implemented SPs in its curriculum since 2009. After practicing on each other, students will have a chance to practice on SPs to practice interacting with strangers. The final examination is also based on an Objective Structured Clinical Examination of a SP in hope that such a method will help students learn while acquiring skills for the medical field.

#### **Works cited:**

Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China (December 19th, 2018). Accessed March 6, 2019. <https://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?media=print&pcode=L0020166>