Facilitated feedback

Welcome to the 30th issue of REd! We have covered many topics since the first issue published in 2007—including clinical supervision, assessing performance and using the medical humanities in your teaching—and look forward to producing many more.

This issue focuses on debriefing, specifically in association with simulated learning experiences. Debriefing is a crucial part of simulation and is often the largest component of a teaching session. There is no best method of debriefing and we discuss why. We always like to hear about your experiences so please send them in.

Pam Harvey,
(pam.harvey@monash.edu)

Natalie Radomski, Manager, NWRMEU
(natalie.radomski@monash.edu)

“No matter how technically sound a debriefing is, there are social and interpersonal matters that need to be addressed if the debriefing is to have its desired impact.”
Stephanie Voyer & Rose Hatala,
Simulation Educators

Debriefing learners in simulation

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About REd

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In Focus ... debriefing learners

Simulation-based learning is now a strong component of many health professional education programs. An important part of simulation is feedback to the learner about their (or their team’s) performance, which often includes the elements of debriefing.\(^1\) Debriefing has been defined as ‘a process to elicit information pertaining to an experienced event in order to gain a better understanding of it’\(^2\) or, through an experiential learning theory framework, as ‘facilitated or guided reflection in the cycle of experiential learning’.\(^3\) The experiential component of debriefing has its foundation in the work of proponents of action-reflection learning cycles such as Kolb and Gibbs.

Facilitator involvement

Although there are many models of debriefing, there are some common guidelines facilitators need to consider when deciding on their own process of feedback. Debriefing should be facilitated by competent instructors who optimise learning opportunities. The content and method should suit the learner’s context, and the timing of the debrief - i.e. during or after the scenario or both - needs to be planned.\(^4\) Creating a safe environment for debriefing where learners can engage with professional practice challenges without feeling intimidated is as important as the simulation itself.\(^5\) At a broader level, the pedagogical framework of the selected debriefing method needs to link to an underlying learning theory.\(^6\)

As well as the number of debriefing models, there are also levels of facilitation to consider.\(^7\)

A high level of facilitation actually refers to a low-level of facilitator involvement, leaving the process of debriefing (and associated scripts for change) to the participants who are guided only when necessary. This group-directed facilitation approach uses open-ended questions and time for reflection rather than stating facts about performance. Intermediate facilitation involves giving assistance to the participants when further analysis of their experience would benefit their learning, such as rephrasing their words for better understanding or using effective questioning techniques to elicit reflective responses. Low levels of facilitation requires explicit facilitator involvement as instructors guide the debriefing process through all of its stages and assist participants to reflect. The skills of the instructor in being able to choose – or modify – the correct level of facilitation for a group or individual is important for the effectiveness of debriefing as a learning opportunity.

Enhancing learning

A recent systematic review of debriefing methods suggests it is difficult to ‘identify the best available evidence on the effectiveness of debriefing’\(^8\) for simulation-based learning but did conclude that specific learning outcomes, including situational awareness and decision-making skills, are enhanced with debriefing as part of the educational experience. The importance of debriefing with a skilled facilitator, then, should form an ‘integral component of all simulation learning experiences’.\(^9\)

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3. Fanning op cit p.116
6. Raemer, et al., op cit
7. Fanning op cit
9. Levet-Jones op cit p.63
In Practice … models of debriefing

One method of debriefing will not suit all learning situations and the theoretical framework for the simulation activity will guide the type of facilitation needed for success. Here are some common types of structured debriefing methods used with simulated-based education.

**Gibbs Reflective Cycle**: useful for post-event analysis in many learning situations, the cycle includes 6 basic steps: description (what happened?), feelings (reactions), evaluation (what worked well/challenges), analysis (sense-making), conclusions (summarising experiences) and action plan (where to from here?).

**Advocacy-Inquiry**: focuses on understanding the ‘frames’ within which the learner and the facilitator are thinking i.e. their assumptions, feelings, goals, knowledge base, situational awareness and context. The facilitator uses a statement of observation (‘I noticed this happening…’) followed by probing question of inquiry (‘Why do you think this happened…?’). Learners’ responses lead to reflection on action.

**Plus-Delta**: debriefing is based on three questions - what went well, what participants would like to change and how they would change it.

**3D model**: this method has three main phases - defusing, discovering and deepening. The process involves participants reflecting upon the experience, identifying the processes or cognitive models that led to actions in the simulation, and then developing new behavioural processes to be used in future experiences.

**G.A.S. (gather – analyse – summarise) model**: also known as the structured and supporting debriefing model. The facilitator listens to the learner’s description and feelings about the event, helps with reflection and analysis of what happens, and assists in identifying and reviewing lessons learned.

**Lederman’s model**: follows three debriefing phases – introduction to systematic reflection and analysis, analysis of the experience through intensification and personalisation, and generalisation and application of learnings from the experience.

**Petranek's model**: sometimes called the 4Es but often expanded to seven Es, this model concentrates on events, emotions, empathy, explanation and analysis; and then everyday applicability, employment of information and evaluation.

**Self-debriefing**: the cost of expert debriefing has led to the establishment of self-debriefing, a method currently under research. It involves self-assessment or peer-assessment of performance, usually within guidelines, and may involve objective and subjective individual or collaborative ratings.

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**Key Concepts:**

- **Funnelling**: the facilitator guides the participants’ reflections without commenting
- **Framing**: outlines the simulation experience to enhance relevance and meaning
- **Frontloading**: using specific questions to redirect reflection
- **Solution-focused facilitation**: makes the focus of the questions on solutions rather than problems
- **Directional-style debriefing**: specifically intended to change the way participants think

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Humanities in Health Care

It is only in a place far away from grids of skyscrapers that one can catch the grandeur of the setting sun.

As budding young doctors, we all tend to get ahead of ourselves, in eagerness to spread our wings and take flight. However, the journey in medicine is one of perpetual learning, and we learn and improve on our skills and knowledge with each passing day. Staying grounded keeps us anchored, and there will come a day, where it is our turn to fly.

For I was born, born to fly.

Joel Loi (Year 2 Monash University MBBS 2015)

‘Humanities in Health Care’ submissions are original creative pieces that reflect the nature of a health professional’s work and the care of patients.

Direct all queries to pam.harvey@monash.edu

Aristotle

“The things we have to learn before we do them, we learn by doing them.”

Simulation Australasia (simulationaustralia.org.au/)

With a vision to ‘provide a forum for those involved with simulation across Australasia, to allow for discussion and distribution of information, and to further advance the research, development and use of simulation technologies and practices in society, industry, academia and government’, Simulation Australasia supports simulation in various industries.

It has special interest communities for health, human dimensions, defence, emergency management and national safety, modelling and decision support, transport and infrastructure. Each year, they host a conjunct conference of SimTecT and SimHealth which helps to generate interest and collaboration across sectors.