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Canada's largest pediatric patient simulation lab opens

KidSIM Centre at Alberta Children's Hospital will improve clinical care

CALGARY – Medical staff and students at Alberta Children's Hospital (ACH) are now able to practise life-saving care in Canada's largest pediatric patient simulation lab, which opens today.

The \$2.3-million KidSIM Centre, located on the hospital's fourth floor, provides a simulated clinical experience where health providers can hone their skills on lifelike, computerized pediatric mannequins. The mannequins breathe, speak and have a pulse and blood pressure. The 375-square-metre centre is about 10 times larger than the hospital's previous simulation space.

"The KidSIM Centre is truly leading the nation," says Dr. Vincent Grant, Medical Director of the KidSim Pediatric Simulation Program.

"We have one of the broadest and busiest pediatric simulation programs in the world with more than 70 specially trained simulation facilitators, 10 computer-generated mannequins of varying ages and size, and five simulation labs all located in the new centre."

KidSIM is able to mimic situations within various areas of the hospital such as the emergency department and intensive care units, operating rooms, and a variety of outpatient clinics.

"By making the situation as lifelike as possible, it is hoped that staff and students experience the pressure and stressors of the real situation, enabling them to better experience what it is like to manage these life-threatening emergencies as part of an interprofessional team," says Dr. Grant.

This translates into better patient care, says KidSIM program co-ordinator Traci Robinson.

"KidSIM provides real-life experience in many of the scenarios a health care provider would face without actually working on live patients," she says. "There are very few areas of the Alberta Children's Hospital where simulation training is not used to enhance, supplement or, in some cases, replace traditional learning."

Earlier this year, a team from the emergency department at ACH went through simulation training where they managed 14 scenarios involving a school bus crash. Many of the staff who attended these sessions were involved in helping patients from an actual bus crash a few months later.

Staff indicated they felt the simulation training added to their confidence and efficiency in managing multiple patient casualties and their families.

"By building confidence and expertise through deliberate practise, we can better prepare health care providers for real-life situations, enabling our staff and physicians to be as prepared as possible when dealing with our most critically ill children," Robinson says.

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The new KidSIM Centre is outfitted with the latest innovations in audiovisual playback and recording equipment, which will not only enhance the learning, but will continue to allow for the KidSIM research program to evaluate best teaching methods and the impact of simulation on performance, teamwork, quality and safety, and patient outcome.

The new KidSIM Centre was funded through donations to the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation.

"We are so grateful to live in a community that supports continued education in health care and recognizes the value in this kind of innovation," says Dr. Grant. "This new centre will help us expand our expertise in interprofessional education, family-centred care, outreach education, faculty development, internationally recognized research and enhanced patient safety."

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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