

## Beverly Citizen

# Simulator training at Beverly Hospital prepares nursing students for careers

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## Photos

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Courtesy of Amy Astolfi

Mary Beth Jenkins, R.N. at Northeast Health System, treats one of the ‘patients’ in Beverly Hospital’s new Nursing Education Simulation Center. The Simulation Center is set up like a small hospital filled with patient rooms and computerized manikins who exhibit symptoms of illnesses and diseases, which will allow local nursing students at Endicott College to receive hands-on training.

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**By Katrina Powell/ Wicked Local Beverly  
GateHouse News Service**

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Beverly, Mass. —

Just as a patient is admitted to **Beverly Hospital** for chest pains, he goes into cardiac arrest. Nurses observe that the patient is having major difficulty breathing and the monitors show that his heart rate is rapidly dropping. Suddenly, the patient’s heart stops.

Luckily, the patient is not a human being; he is a life-like manikin who is a part of Beverly Hospital's Nursing Education Simulation Center. The manikins are built to resemble real patients as much as possible, said Cheryl Merrill, director of nursing practice, quality and education at Beverly Hospital, who explained that the "patients" can cry, sweat, blink, have difficulty breathing, go into cardiac arrest and they can even flat line. But like real patients, they can also respond to treatments and recover.

"The manikins are so high tech now that within a very few seconds you forget that it's not a real patient," Merrill said. "The benefit is that it allows practitioners to take care of patients and learn without having to worry that they're going to harm a real patient."

The Nursing Education Simulation Center at Beverly Hospital had its official opening last week, and will begin to offer practical hands-on training for nursing students attending local colleges such as Endicott College in Beverly, Salem State University in Salem and North Shore Community College in Lynn. The training will be available to nursing students who are doing their clinical at Beverly Hospital, Merrill said, estimating that approximately 200 nursing students are placed at the hospital for clinical work every week.

"We have students from the three schools that are right in our area participating in clinicals at Beverly Hospital," she said. "The students rotate through here, and during their clinical experience here we give them the opportunity to participate in educational activities. Now that we're moving into simulation we'll be able to move towards actual real-life scenario care."

Merrill explained that the Simulation Center mimics the feel of a small hospital and "patients" span from a newborn baby to a geriatric patient. The patients are high-tech computerized manikins who mirror the symptoms, illnesses and diseases of real people, which gives students an opportunity to feel as if they are treating actual patients.

"We believe the biggest benefit of having the simulator is that it is so much closer to real life experience," Merrill said. "The literature is clear that the very best way for direct care providers to really become competent is in simulated experiences. It's much more realistic than having a student just read a case study where the students will read about what they would do if they were in the situation. But in simulated experience, they have to actually respond if a patient has trouble breathing."

The simulator training will allow for students to work directly with their professors and with medical professionals in a real-life hospital setting, explained Kelly Fisher, dean of the Nursing Program at Endicott College.

"It's a more collaborative environment," Fisher said.

Fisher explained that the simulator training will be required for all nursing students at Endicott, as part of their six nursing courses. Students will spend six weeks in the simulation lab.

“We create real-life scenarios and it really reenacts real-life situations so that the students are able to take care of high-risk patients,” Fisher said. “The nice part about the simulation center is that students who will be rotating through will be able to participate in the center.”

Fisher explained that the nursing department at Endicott has been using its own manikin as part of the course training for five years.

“Our center at Endicott has limitations as it only has one manikin, while there are several at Beverly [Hospital] that are more high-tech than ours,” Fisher said. “This is a really great way for students to become competent in a safe setting. I think that our students will be thrilled to begin working at the center.”

The simulator training will also be available to recent nursing graduates at the three schools, Merrill said.

“There is always such a transition for them when they leave a traditional academic setting,” Merrill said. “We know that it’s a real challenge for new graduate nurses to develop competency.”

— *For more information on Beverly Hospital and the Nursing Education Simulation Center, visit [beverlyhospital.org](http://beverlyhospital.org).*

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