

What is a Standardized Patient?

A Simulated/Standardized Patient (SP) is a person who has been coached to accurately and consistently recreate the history, personality, physical findings, and emotional structure and response pattern of an actual patient at a particular point in time.

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine employs Standardized Patients in the training and evaluation of health care professionals. As a Standardized Patient, you will be interviewed and examined, just as you would by your regular doctor, by male and female health-care students. In the patient role, you may see several (4-12) students on a one-to-one basis during an evaluation session or there may be a group of students (2-7) working with you in a controlled teaching session.

How will I know what to say when the students interview me?

You will be given a “patient case” or script detailing the current medical problem, past medical history, family and social situation, and emotional state you will need to portray. You will learn to appear as the patient by using specific body language, movement, and if appropriate, responses to physical examination. You will also be trained to look for specific student responses and skills, to record them and to give feedback to the students on their performances.

Will the students know we aren't real patients?

Yes, all students are aware that they are seeing SPs, but they are instructed to treat the SP just like a real patient.

Will I have to have physical examinations done?

It depends on your assignment, role, or case. Some scenarios require students to perform partial or complete physical examinations, while others focus on interviewing the patient only. Before you are offered an opportunity to take on a patient role we will talk with you to ensure you are comfortable with what you are expected to do. We will not at any time force you to portray any case, interview, or physical exam that makes you feel uncomfortable.

What type of physical examinations will be done?

Students will perform focused physical examinations based on the patient case. These examinations may include: listening to heart and lungs with a stethoscope; pressing on your abdomen, neck, face, and limbs to assess tenderness; using a scope to look in your ears, eyes, nose, and throat; taking your pulse and blood pressure; checking muscle strength, reflexes, range of motion, and gait. A small group of specialized SPs, Standardized Patient Teaching Associates (SPTAs), are trained to teach basic physical examination techniques using their own bodies. Sensitive exams such as breast, pelvic, genital, or rectal examinations are not performed. Invasive procedures such as injections, blood drawing, X-ray, etc. are not performed.

Will I have to remove my clothing?

SPs undergoing physical exams are generally required to wear hospital gowns during the sessions. You always wear underclothing beneath the gowns, usually shorts or sweatpants, as well as a sports bra for females.

Will I need to know a lot about medicine?

No! Your patient case will contain all the information you need for portrayal and feedback.

Is my previous health history important?

It might be. Each patient is matched with a case – an SP who has had an appendectomy could not portray a patient with appendicitis. However, a surgical scar might not matter in a case about a headache, or wrist pain. Your answers on the medical database questionnaire will help match you to appropriate patient cases.

How are Standardized Patients selected?

As an SP, you will use a wide range of skills. You will need to role-play and work with a varied group of people. It is important for any encounters requiring physical examinations that you are comfortable with your body and letting others touch and examine you. Strong written and verbal communication skills are required. Punctuality, reliability, flexibility, a positive attitude and a desire to help students learn are imperative.

Do I need to be an actor?

No, although many actors work as SPs. The focus is on providing the student with an educational opportunity, not on performance or dramatic interpretation. Playing a patient case is extremely repetitive and precise, as exactly the same simulation must be presented for every student encounter. However, many actors and non-actors find this work rewarding. You will contribute to the education of future health care providers, and the majority of students are extremely grateful for the opportunity to work with SPs and receive feedback on their skills in a “safe” environment. An added bonus is that SPs often become more comfortable with their own medical issues while working in the program.

How often would I work?

The work is temporary, part-time, and seasonal. SP sessions are scheduled according to student needs and program requirements. Some SPs will work each morning for a month, others may work every other week, still others may work three full days in a month. SPs who perform satisfactorily may be given first preference for future work, depending on need and case requirements.

How much does it pay?

Currently SPs are paid an hourly rate (\$15-22/hr depending on experience and assignment) through Oakland University's payroll system, and receive payment twice per month.

Will I have to grade the student?

Sometimes. If you act as a rater you will be trained to complete a checklist record of the encounter. Sometimes you will be asked to subjectively rate communication skills. For some student encounters a specialized group of SPs, Standardized Patient Communications Associate (SPCAs), are trained to provide detailed constructive feedback for students.

What else should I know about being a Standardized Patient?

This job is not easy and it is not for everybody. It requires intense concentration while being interviewed and or examined. You must be able to consistently respond exactly as a real patient would. You must be able to maintain not only the patient's character, but also simulate that patient's physical condition during an encounter. SPTAs and SPCAs require additional, rigorous training before working with students. When the encounter is over you must recall the student's performance and record it on a checklist. You may also be required to provide verbal feedback directly to the student. You will repeat these tasks many times in succession without change. Being an SP takes energy, memorization, discipline, concentration, excellent communication skills, and a high level of comfort with your own health.

I'm interested in becoming a Standardized Patient. What should I do next?

Complete and submit the online [application](#). Your application will be kept on file, and you may contact us at any time to update information. Group interviews are conducted periodically throughout the year and are by appointment only. If you are invited for an interview we will contact you with arrangements.