2013

Implementing a latex allergy awareness, avoidance and management strategy for use in a simulated environment

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**Publication Details**  
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Abstract
Abstract of poster presented at the SimHealth 2013 Conference.

Keywords
avoidance, management, strategy, simulated, environment, implementing, latex, allergy, awareness

Disciplines
Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

This conference paper is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/smhpapers/1203
Implementing a latex allergy awareness, avoidance and management strategy for use in a simulated environment

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AIMS: Develop and implement a latex allergy awareness, avoidance and management strategy for Bachelor of Nursing students, simulation staff, lecturers, sessional tutors and simulated patients who use the School of Nursing, Laboratory and Simulation Suite.

BACKGROUND: Latex allergy is an ever increasing issue for personnel in health care and it is well documented that increased exposure to latex increases the risk of developing Type I or Type IV allergic reaction to the latex molecule (Gawchik, 2011). Considering these risks, the simulated environment provides the potential for increased exposure to latex through use of latex gloves, medical devices and simulation equipment (Katrancha, & Harshberger, 2012). In the interests of workplace health and safety including risk of litigation, reducing personnel risk to allergy is paramount within any facility.

METHODS: An awareness, avoidance and management strategy was developed in response to an adverse event where a student nurse, who was new to the Bachelor of Nursing Program and not aware of latex allergy, required hospital treatment following a Type 1 allergic reaction to latex gloves during a simulated teaching session. This strategy incorporated an awareness campaign targeting students, simulation staff, lecturers, sessional tutors and simulated patients, as well as implementation of a specific latex policy to enhance the existing risk assessment tool.

RESULT: The strategy enabled students, simulation staff, lecturers, sessional tutors and simulated patients to take responsibility for self-assessment of risk of developing latex allergy. It also provided a step by step guide to management of Type I and Type IV reaction to latex in the simulated environment. This proactive approach reduces exposure to the latex molecule to prevent the onset of (or exacerbation of existing) latex allergy in the simulated environment as well as subsequent clinical practice.

CONCLUSIONS: Implementation of an awareness, avoidance and management strategy contributes to reduced exposure to the latex molecule, which in turn decreases the risk of developing latex allergy. This Workplace Health and Safety strategy can be adapted to fit any environment, particularly where students, simulation staff, lecturers, sessional tutors and simulated patients are at risk of developing latex allergy.

REFERENCES:

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: The authors have no relevant arrangements, direct affiliations or financial relationships.