



MEDICAL EDUCATION  
SCHOLARSHIP CENTRE

## Medical Education Scholarship Forum Proceedings

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### Young patients tell their own stories

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**Purpose:** How can medical students learn about chronic illnesses in pediatric patients? At Memorial University of Newfoundland's Standardized Patient (SP) program, a new approach has provided a successful bridge from classroom to clinic. Our newest collaboration is to provide pediatric patients with chronic illnesses for formative clinical skills sessions. **Methods:** Over the past 10 years, the pediatrics department has asked the SP program to provide SPs for an increasing number of sessions, including adolescent interviews, growth and development of pre-school and school-age children. After extensive curriculum development, a new initiative focusing on children with chronic illnesses was formulated. **Results:** The objectives for student/patient interactions were identified. Recruitment strategies of appropriate patients were outlined. Training for parents and children, respecting privacy and personal choice, was implemented. Students became more engaged in ALL of our pediatric sessions. **Conclusions:** Before the SP program could even introduce young chronic patients and parents into the curriculum, a list of objectives had to be created: to take a focused history of the current illness, how it was diagnosed and how the patient and family are currently doing; to better understand and appreciate the impact a chronic illness can have on a child and the family; to do a complete history and physical exam on the child. With the academic objectives in place, the SP program's recruitment, training, and placement of young, stable chronic patients into the Med II curriculum has proven to be very successful. Tutors and students can always depend on the availability of appropriate patients to practice their history taking and physical examination clinical skills. Parents can share their children's health histories as well as the impact their child's health has on the family.