**What is a Standardized Patient?***"The Standardized Patient (SP) is a person who has been carefully coached to simulate an actual patient so accurately that the simulation cannot be detected by a skilled clinician. In performing the simulation, the SP presents the gestalt of the patient being simulated; not just the history, but the body language, the physical findings and the emotional and personality characteristics as well." - Howard S. Barrows, 1987*

We use standardized patients (SPs) to simulate a real patient in a real healthcare setting - allowing students to have the opportunity to practice taking a history and performing a physical examination on a patient in a safe and controlled environment.

**What types of physical examinations would be done?**Physical examinations may focus on well or problem-focused visits, and generally involve history taking, patient interviews, data collection, diagnosis, and developing a plan of care. For example, the student may take your blood pressure; listen to your heart and lungs with a stethoscope; press on your abdomen; look into your eyes, ears and throat; check your reflexes, etc. Learners *will never* perform intimate exams(such as female pelvic and breast exams, male prostate/rectal exams) on SPs, and *examinations will never* involve taking blood, administering medication, or giving injections.

**How do I know what to say when the learner interviews me?**SPs attend a training session for each case approximately 2 weeks before the simulation date. The training session includes introduction of case (background, role specifics, scripting, and overview of the simulation encounter), discussion of necessary terminology, practice involving role-playing for the simulation encounter with coaching and feedback from the SP Educator/trainer, followed by coaching feedback construction, and opportunity for additional practice, questions, and clarifications.

**Do I need acting experience?**No. Some SPs may have acting experience, but most do not. Unlike acting, this work has nothing to do with finding dramatic moments or playing to an audience. An SP’s portrayal of a patient or family member is strictly for educational purposes, and not for entertainment. It can be very repetitive, as exactly the same simulation must be done for every student who sees you. You will receive training on how to specifically act or behave during the simulation encounter, but you are portraying a regular person, a patient, who typically has limited knowledge about their condition.

**I think I can do this job-it sounds pretty easy!**Maybe, but it may be more difficult than you think. It can be quite challenging and is not for everybody. This job requires good concentration and memory, as well as the ability to interact with many different types of people. It takes energy, discipline, excellent communication skills and a certain level of comfort with your own body. This work involves disciplining yourself within the needs of the case you are portraying and being prepared and effective at delivering constructive feedback to the learners. It can be very repetitive, since the same simulation must be done for every student who sees you.

**Is it safe?**Yes. There is no reason for anyone to do anything to you that might be harmful. You are not really sick, just simulating someone who is sick. The examinations are very basic and do not cause harm to a patient. At most, there may be some mild discomfort or fatigue portraying the symptoms of the case several times a day.

**Do the students know that I am not a real patient?**Yes. Students are told when they are going to be seeing standardized patients during simulation encounters. They are told to treat the SPs as they would real patients in a real health care setting. Likewise, you are expected to remain in character, in the role as the patient, whenever you are interacting with students during the simulation and during the feedback session.

**How often will I work?**This will vary and is completely based on demographic requests and the needs of the faculty (PRN). It depends on what criteria simulation the faculty want to coordinate for their students. There are some SPs who will work for us several weeks a month and some that we may only use for one or two scenarios a semester. SPs who have demonstrated satisfactory work for us before are given the opportunity to work more often, depending on demographic requirements of the case.  *Note: If you are looking for a specific amount of pay or require a minimum number of hours of work per month, this may not be the job for you.*

**I've had a couple of health problems in the past. Can I still be used as a Standardized Patient?**Probably. Everyone has had some sort of medical history. Sometimes it doesn't matter if the SP has a medical problem that the patient in the case they are portraying has not had. There may be occasions in which it could potentially matter. It is important to note that this work can be tiring. If, because of your medical condition, you tire easily, then this work may not be suitable for you.

**Will I need to know a lot about medicine?**No. We will teach you what you need to know about the case you will be portraying. Remember, you are to portray a patient-most patients have limited knowledge about their condition.

**Will I need to take my clothes off?**Sometimes, yes. However, if the patient case requires the students to perform a physical examination, then the SP will wear a hospital gown (always with undergarments). You may elect to wear shorts under the hospital gown and in most cases, women can wear a cami top over their bra. Cases which require no physical examination, SPs wear their own regular clothing. You always have the option of telling us if you would prefer not to portray cases which involve physical exams.

**I’m still interested, what do I do next?**Contact Amy Williams, who oversees the SP Program. She may be reached via email [awilliams@sc.edu](mailto:awilliams@sc.edu)