

CLINICAL SKILLS CENTRE

Using state-of-the-art
technology to teach hands-
on medical skills



Doctor Rachel Weiss
Director of Clinical
Skills Centre

Medicine doesn't get more real than in the simulated world of the Clinical Skills Centre (CSC). It is one of the fastest-growing entities in the Faculty of Health Science – providing simulation training to all medical and allied health programmes at the University of Cape Town.

“My vision and mission is to expand and organise a broad clinical skills programme at UCT, with the goal of graduating better-prepared and more practical, hands-on students in the most cost-efficient way,” says CSC director, Doctor Rachel Weiss.

She is looking to the future, where she sees the CSC having the mandate and responsibility for supporting simulation training in all disciplines, while contributing to the continuous professional development of nursing staff at Groote Schuur Hospital and surrounding healthcare facilities. The centre already runs a wide range of programmes and projects, including a mother and baby

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simulation unit, and incorporates digital technology in various applications.

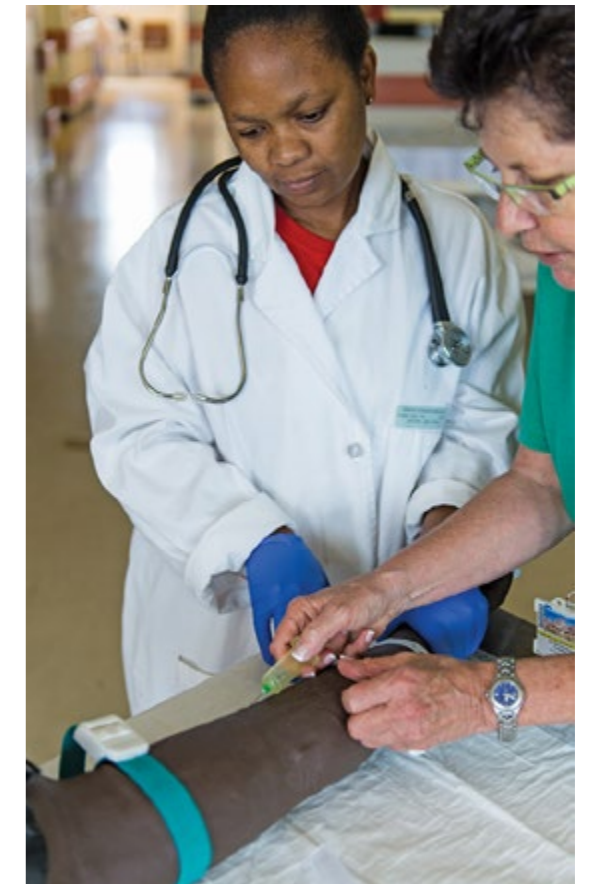
“I am excited to see how interest in simulation is growing at UCT, especially among the new generation of heads of department, consultants and registrars,” says Doctor Weiss.

CSC also plays a significant role in promoting community-oriented, patient-centred behaviour and attitudes in students through community engagement. In one instance, for example, third year medical students spent a day at the Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre and were tasked with discovering their patients’ story. “This cultivates an appreciation for patients as a primary source of learning and encourages students to develop a holistic view of health care,” says Doctor Weiss.

Finding the funds to keep this multi-faceted operation going, Doctor Weiss admits, is challenging. “Funding is only one part of the challenge; finding, training and retaining a skilled workforce is much harder!”

There is much more that CSC can do, she says. For instance, the centre is inundated with requests for basic and advanced life support courses, which will require financing and managing a larger team. “We also urgently need to develop a sustainable, multifunctional Simulated Patient Programme, in order to relieve the burden on over-exposed ward patients, to develop a greater focus on communication skills in the curricula and to create practice opportunities for nursing diploma students, who have very little access to patients.”

But Doctor Weiss must be doing something right. The graduating MBChB Class of 2013 presented her with the Distinguished Teacher Award in recognition of her contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning over the course of their undergraduate studies.



Gail Edelstein (right) showing Nosipho Tyembile the phlebotomy technique on a model.

She sees this as added motivation to continue the work she has been doing. “I believe that while skills training should start in a simulation laboratory, students as well as nursing and medical staff need real clinical environments. In five years’ time, I want to be able to include students, doctors and hospital nursing staff in simulated, interprofessional, context-specific scenarios in theatre, in hospital wards and in clinics.”

The ultimate aim, says Doctor Weiss, is not just to give people the necessary skills to pass an objective structured clinical exam (OSCE) or skills test but to inspire and empower them “to provide the best possible patient care within the institutional context.”