

Someday I'd like to be a...

Simulation Education Specialist

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Meet Fran Powell, MHA, BSN, RN

Simulation Education Specialist
WakeMed Health & Hospitals

“As a simulation education specialist, I create scenarios and classes that help healthcare providers learn new skills, practice working as a team, and perfect procedure techniques in a safe, realistic environment.”

WHAT A SIMULATION EDUCATION SPECIALIST DOES

The WakeMed Center for Innovative Learning offers clinical training and education for all levels of healthcare providers using human patient simulators, educational gaming, and other technologies. The Center for Innovative Learning features an ambulance so we can take trainings on the road, and a facility designed to model a hospital with rooms, nurses' stations, crash carts, etc. As a simulation education specialist, I create real-life training programs for employees throughout the region. Using interactive technology like human patient simulators helps students learn by being hands-on instead of educating exclusively through lectures.

TYPICAL WORK DAY

My schedule varies every day. Most education sessions last for two hours. At the end of a class, participants share and reflect on the training. It is during this debriefing where most of the real learning takes place.

THE MOST REWARDING PART OF MY JOB

Seeing that “aha” moment when someone gets what I am teaching is very rewarding.

WHY I CHOSE THIS CAREER

This career chose me. I have been a nurse for more than 30 years. Being a nurse and educator goes hand in hand because it is your job to teach your patient about their condition and care at home. When the WakeMed Center for Innovative Learning opened, it was a perfect fit for me because I love teaching and I love technology.

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN SCHOOL

In addition to focusing on sciences, you need to be aware that acting (theatrics) is part of this job. You have to be willing to perform and engage in different roles as needed for training – one day you might be a hysterical parent, the next an emotional nurse. We also dress our patient simulators so any type of costume, theater group, and/or make-up training would be helpful. In addition, it is important to have basic to advanced computer skills and an understanding of the human body and technology.

EDUCATION BACKGROUND/PRIOR EXPERIENCE

I have a degree in nursing and a master's in health administration. I have been at WakeMed for more than 20 years (30 years of nursing experience) and have worked with inpatient adult acute care and in the nursing education department. Both of these jobs prepared me to be in simulation education because I understand bedside care and can also design programs to ensure participants earn continuing education credits or certifications.

