



Directing skills: Judy McCormick, manager of Schulich's Clinical Skills Learning Program, talks with standardized patients Germaine and Jessica

COMMUNITY

A teaching role

THE PERFORMANCES have nothing to do with dramatic timing and leave little room for creative interpretation. But when standardized patients portray an illness, they help to mould the performance of future physicians.

An integral part of the Clinical Skills Learning Program at UWO's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, standardized patients are trained to teach medical students what can't be learned from a textbook—physical exam and communication skills—by depicting a variety of patient roles targeted to curricular objectives.

For portrayals, standardized patients get a written "script" that includes background on their roles and what symptoms they'll be presenting. They also receive information about social and emotional factors that will let them convincingly represent various patients and their illnesses. Taking centre stage, standardized patients simulate case files for the purposes of testing both the medical knowledge and clinical application of

those entering the medical profession.

"Being a SP helps give me insight into the world of medicine and hopefully helps to create better doctors," says Alycin Hayes, a local musician who has worked as a standardized patient for several years.

Professional actors in their own right (they're paid a fee ranging from about \$50 to \$200 per session, depending on complexity and time involved), standardized patients come from all corners of the London community—Schulich keeps about 350 actors on call with a healthy waiting list.

And while standardized patients can take pride from contributing to the tutelage of our future doctors, there can be educational benefits for them as well. Hayes, for example, says she is now a more critical judge of her own doctor's diagnostic technique—and her role in it. "I know when he does or doesn't ask the questions he should. I have learned to present my symptoms more clearly, too."

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