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Background and context:
The Bachelor of Nursing Science Course commenced for the first time in 2005 at one of the newest universities in Queensland, Australia. Feedback from the first and second year nursing students informed us that the existing teaching methods did not meet their learning needs. Students indicated that they wanted more hands on practice of skills. They found the manikins were not realistic, despite them being programmable to simulate sound effects aimed at teaching students’ cardiology and respiratory assessment.

Aims, objectives and outline of main content
The teaching methods of the clinical courses were restructured and new teaching strategies have been implemented to improve student learning.

Detailed case scenarios were written and students were challenged with constructing a case file containing an admission, medication chart, care plan and discharge. The case scenarios required students to demonstrate nursing skills such as wound dressings, and then complete the documentation.

Realism has been brought to the proceeding by inviting volunteers to attend the University as patients for the assessment sessions. The use of volunteers has enabled students to practise nursing skills such as communication in a safe environment on real people instead of the manikins.

Conclusion and implications:
Evaluations are currently being carried out to collect the perceptions of the students, volunteers and staff on the course. To date feedback has been positive. Comprehensive simulation with real people enables students and tutors to replicate complex situations, recreating many of the challenges of real life. The alternative has been that students have been faced with isolated simulations of nursing skills out of context, and not holistic in their approach to patient care. In an age of advancing technology and use of complex machinery to assist and assess health professionals we must remember to balance technology with realism.

We propose that this adapted student centred learning enables us to deliver a real representation of the nursing process in a holistic manner away from the interruption of the business of busy wards which face clinicians that try hard to preceptor students out on placements.