

National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses

NFLPN launches realistic training program and team competition for combat medics.



United States

Founded in 1949, the National Federation of Licensed Professional Nurses (NFLPN) is the official voice of licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) in the United States. It provides leadership for nearly one million members and is the only organization governed entirely by LPNs and LVNs. The NFLPN fosters high standards of nursing care and promotes continued competence through education/certification and lifelong learning, with an emphasis on public protection. NFLPN established the first continuing education program in the US nursing field in 1968; they continue to evaluate programs and award continuing education credits (CEUs) when programs meet their high standards.



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Each year, the NFLPN convention offers an opportunity for nurses to earn CEUs. Michael Robinson, an LPN since 1984 who sits on the NFLPN board of directors, is part of the Army Reserve Medical Command's Medical Readiness Training Command and has served in the military for 30 years. For the past two years, he has organized a new training program held in conjunction with the NFLPN convention: Army Reserve medical soldiers attend the convention to receive part of their mandatory, bi-annual combat medic sustainment training. Last year, Advanced Life Support (ALS) simulators were used extensively for the first time during both military and civilian nurse training programs.

Simulation offers hands-on training under pressure

Robinson incorporated simulation with ALS simulators because he saw the need for hands-on testing for combat medics in CEU classes and wanted "a way to spark the 2009 convention. Usually, there's a conference atmosphere – people listen, take tests – but I wanted something as close to real as you can get because combat is real. The manikins were a great solution."

ALS simulators arrived at the Nashua, New Hampshire training sessions moulaged and programmed for various patient roles as per scenarios requested by the military such as compound fracture, sucking chest wounds, deviated septum and specific illnesses. "If the teams didn't do the medical procedures correctly, the manikin got worse or even died," Robinson said. "While the medic was working on the body, it changed: the manikins breathe, heart rates change and so on. The sessions went over really well, and everyone felt like they really accomplished something."

Civilian nurses and combat medics using the ALS simulators received training in several crucial areas, including:

- tourniquet application
- bleeding control



- emergency bandaging
- amputation treatment
- splint application
- cricothyrotomy
- needle chest compression
- use of IVs



Medical intervention in battleground scenario competitions

Hands-on sessions culminated in another well-received training component for military soldiers: a team-based medical simulation competition. Five, five-man teams went into a 'combat' area, secured it, and then found, triaged, treated and evacuated all of the 'patients' to a waiting helicopter.

"This was the first time we had manikins at the convention, and the medical simulation warrior competition was a really big hit," said Robinson. "Winning teams received trophies for first, second and third prize, which they took back to their units to display."

Networking and operational efficiency add more kudos

The training sessions using the ALS simulators gave civilian nurses and combat medics the opportunity to network with and learn from one another while participating in performance evaluations, engaging in critical thinking and executing medical procedures. "All who participated said it was very exciting. They will be back for more at our October 2010 convention in Birmingham, Alabama," Robinson said.

There was a time saving advantage for military personnel as well. Medical soldiers returned to their units with half of their mandatory bi-annual sustainment training finished, and are thus available for other mission requirements. Medical commanders around the country couldn't be more pleased with this cost saving improvement to efficient regional operations.

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