

Abstract Annotation: Commentary: Key issues to consider for reviewing and designing simulated patient studies

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Steinman, Kenneth J. "Commentary: Key issues to consider for reviewing and designing simulated patient studies." *International journal of epidemiology* (2014): dyu078.

<http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/04/04/ije.dyu078.short>

The commentary, noting the increase of papers published on unannounced SP (USP) programs, provides a brief overview of key issues to consider when reading or designing these types of studies.

Issues to consider:

1. *Inter-rater reliability*: Studies should routinely document inter-rater reliability and consider effect of SP bias in rating more complex interaction between SP and health care providers as in an unannounced standardized patient encounter.
2. *Impact of learner effect*: the study should document how it accounts for learning effects that may develop over time. For example a USP may learn what is most important in data gathering and emphasize their actions and responses to lead the participant to respond or act earlier in the encounter.
3. *Impact on the test environment*: pilot studies should be run to look at 2 factors
 - a. Document the number and average duration of encounters
 - b. Adjust the methods to save time and effort without reducing data quality.
4. *Include information on how other programs can replicate the methodology more efficiently*
5. *Improve medical subject headings for studies employing any SP methodology*. This would allow more efficient search for articles reviewing methodological rigor.

I think this article compliments the work done by our own ASPE G&R committee Lisa Howley, Karen Szauter, Linda Perkowski, Maurice Clifton and Nancy McNaughton in 2008, as cited below.

Howley, Lisa, et al. "Quality of standardised patient research reports in the medical education literature: review and recommendations." *Medical education* 42.4 (2008): 350-358.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2007.02999.x/full>

I have been using this ASPE article to review submissions to journals or MedEdPortal and will now include these suggested parameters as well. Reading this article also points to the current relevance of the 2008 review article, specifically, how pertinent it still is to the review and design of SP method studies.

Also, another article recommendation, which was presented in workshop format at ASPE 2014 is one written by Diana Tabak and colleagues introducing “The Gut Bucket” as a novel training tool for standardized patients. Their work is now published in the Clinical teacher:

Delaney-Laupacis, Karen, Kerri Weir, and Diana Tabak. "The 'gut bucket': a novel training tool for standardised patients." *The clinical teacher* 11.2 (2014): 120-123.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tct.12077/full>