

Director's Corner: Leading the Way in Innovation for Enhanced Veteran Care

By Eric Bruns, MBA | SimLEARN Executive Director



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By embracing the power of innovation, the Simulation Learning, Evaluation, Assessment, and Research Network (SimLEARN) is revolutionizing Veteran care and transforming the future of simulation in health care. Let me start by sharing a story that captures the essence of this shared mission and the power of innovation in enhancing Veteran care. Imagine a combat medic, fresh from the military service, bringing their expertise and life-saving skills to the civilian health care system. This brave person has the experience, dedication and resilience needed to excel in the demanding world of emergency medicine, but they face a critical challenge: transitioning their combat skills to the complex landscape of civilian health care.

At SimLEARN, we saw this challenge as an opportunity to bridge the gap and empower our military Veterans to continue their service and medical careers. That's why we developed the Foundational Intermediate Care Technician (FICT) course for emergency medicine, which serves as a direct bridge from service to employment for countless military Veterans, enabling them to leverage their military medical expertise and seamlessly transition into roles as Intermediate Care Technicians (ICTs) within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Recently, President Joseph Biden signed into statute the need to train, certify, and employ covered Veterans such as, combat medics and corpsmen within VHA. The FICT SLICE course will be an instrumental part in creating such a pathway for all ICTs. A future integrated project team of experts within the innovation and SimLEARN communities will help guide the path forward on accreditation, certification, federal partnership and expansion of this educational opportunity.

I'm thrilled to share that 10% of our ICTs who chose to take the FICT course have completed it, and we have seen tremendous success. A significant portion of active duty transitioning service members who completed the course have now become U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ICT employees, accounting for 33% of the total number of Veteran ICTs. These remarkable numbers demonstrate a small portion of [SimLEARN's Learning Management \(LM\)](#) portfolio's impact.

But our commitment to innovation does not stop there. In July, I had the privilege of addressing the community of practice during a state of simulation briefing. It was an insightful experience to connect with simulation champions, leaders and specialists who are at the forefront of driving change and progress in our field. Together, we discussed the evolving needs of the field and how SimLEARN has

been diligently working to address them. Through these collaborative efforts, we are continuously elevating the quality of care and training we provide to Veterans.

Furthermore, I want to acknowledge the recent training conducted at the National Simulation Validation, Evaluation, and Testing (SimVET) Center (NSC), where several VA Central Office (VACO) executives attended the [Introduction to Clinical Simulation Training](#) course. The face-to-face training is designed to bridge the gap between clinicians and health care teams who can facilitate health care training using simulation. The VACO executives' participation demonstrates the importance of simulation in health care education and the commitment of our leadership to stay at the forefront of innovation.

Looking ahead, I am happy to announce that September 14 will mark a significant milestone for SimLEARN as we officially launch the National SimVET Center. This event will showcase our unwavering commitment to simulation, analysis and innovative technologies. With the National SimVET Center, we will ensure that no medical device or activity, that we are involved with, touches a Veteran unless it has been rigorously tested and proven safe and effective through simulation. I invite everyone to join us at this landmark event and witness firsthand the cutting-edge technologies being integrated into Veteran care.

But before we reach September, we have another exciting event on the horizon—the SimLEARN Innovation Center for Education (SLICE) and Simulation Showcase. This event, taking place August 1-2, 2023, at the NSC in Orlando, Florida, brings together VHA leaders, simulation champions and specialists for collaboration and best practice sharing in simulation initiatives. We will engage in discussions surrounding strong simulation education practices, challenges and barriers in educational strategies, key concepts in simulation education and best practices.

It is the spirit of embracing innovation and continuous improvement that propels us forward in our mission to provide the highest standard of care to our Veterans. Together, we are revolutionizing the way we approach simulation, training and health care delivery. I am truly honored to be part of this exceptional community and look forward to our continued innovation and transformation journey.