

**Poster Number:** W8

**Abstract Title:** Safe Practice, Real Impact: VR Simulation for Pediatric Mental Health Competency

**Presenters:**

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**Abstract:**

Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (PNPs) increasingly encounter complex pediatric mental health conditions, yet traditional educational approaches often fail to fully prepare students for these challenges. Virtual reality (VR) simulation offers an immersive, competency-based learning strategy that supports real-time clinical decision-making and communication skill development in a safe environment. This educational innovation evaluated the effectiveness of VR simulation in a graduate pediatric mental health course. Faculty created VR mental health scenarios supported by a teaching innovation grant. All enrolled PNP students participated. Outcomes were assessed using student self-assessments, faculty evaluations, simulation performance metrics, and the Student Satisfaction and Self-Confidence in Learning tool. Post-intervention results demonstrate student satisfaction and self-confidence, improved clinical performance, and increased perceived preparedness for real-world pediatric mental health encounters. VR simulation fostered active learning, peer collaboration, and reflective practice, supporting competency-based education. This scalable approach offers a promising model for enhancing pediatric mental health training across nursing education.

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**Keywords:** virtual reality (VR) simulation; pediatric mental health; competency-based education