



# Symposium on Educational Excellence 2023

## Consultant's court: a novel play-acting approach to utilization and application of skills in evidence-based medicine

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### Abstract

Role-play and play-acting have been a growing component of both undergraduate and graduate medical education for the past few decades. Methods using actors as standardized patients or colleagues are used to train our learners in a safe environment to nurture clinical or cultural competency<sup>1</sup>. In other theatrical methods, some training programs use a mock trial learning experience to introduce the concept of malpractice litigation to trainees<sup>2</sup>. However, the use of play-acting to try to reinforce the skills needed by a physician to appraise and apply evidence-based medicine has not been documented.

According to the ACGME common standards: "Residents must demonstrate the ability to investigate and evaluate their care of patients, to appraise and assimilate scientific evidence, and to continuously improve patient care based on constant self-evaluation and lifelong learning" (3) The acquisition, opinion synthesis, and execution of which is not unlike what happens frequently in the court of law. This is more-so true for topics where the science has not been settled and are deemed controversial in their practice. This presents an opportunity for a unique exercise for learners to play-act the role of an attorney arguing a case in front of a jury of peers to come to a reasonable consensus on controversial practices. Within lies many of the skills necessary to become a competent independent practicing physician.

The goal of the activity developed, Consultant's Court, is to create an environment to foster the skills necessary for critical appraisal of medical literature, synthesis of information into an opinion, and defense of that opinion. Learners would play-act the litigation of a controversial medical practice in civil court. A civil court case is different from a criminal court case in that there is a "plaintiff" and a "defendant" as opposed to "prosecution" and "defense" and the jury does not need to reach a unanimous verdict by a majority. The litigants in the case are specific concepts as opposed to individuals (ex. Labor epidural v. Labor CSE - Labor epidural is suing labor CSE for unduly violation of the dura). Of the learners involved, a small cohort (2-3 individuals) would be assigned to represent opposing sides. The jury would be made up of learners attending the session who are not assigned a role. They would observe the proceedings, listen to the cases as they are presented by their peers, and ultimately vote on a verdict based on the arguments and counterarguments presented.

The SEE symposium theme is Advancing Educational Scholarship and Skills in Health Science. This learning endeavor represents the potential for a novel approach to the inquiry-based application of EBM skills. As far as using the model to facilitate educational research the concept remains in early stages but the potential exists to use it to improve critical thinking and appraisal skills across many disciplines.

## Learning Objectives

1. Understand the current landscape of role play medical education currently
2. Recognize the potential to use play-acting in unusual ways
3. Identify how the skills of an attorney are similar to a physician in appraisal of evidence

## References:

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2. Lennon RP, Clebak KT, Stepanian JB, Riley TD. Mock Trial as a Learning Tool in a Family Medicine Residency. *Fam Med*. 2020 Nov;52(10):741-744. doi: 10.22454/FamMed.2020.405328. PMID: 33151535.
3. Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Common Program Requirements (Residency). Chicago, IL: Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education; 2018