APPROACHES TO AUTHORING FOR VIRTUAL PATIENTS AND GAME INFORMED LEARNING

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Summary: Narrative is an essential part of rendering a virtual patient activity meaningful and educationally effective. Our goal was to find a way of developing rich narratives for a range of virtual patients and instantiating them in the Labyrinth virtual patient authoring system (http://labyrinth.mvm.ed.ac.uk//).

Intended Audience: Anyone involved or interested in the educational authoring and use of virtual patients.

Labyrinth-authored virtual patient cases incorporate elements of narrative and computer game play into complex, branching scenarios that offer highly individualised experiences focused primarily on decision making skills and evaluation and synthesis of knowledge, rather than the linear knowledge base enquiries typical of most virtual patient applications. Labyrinth authoring, both by individuals, collaborating clinicians, and clinicians working closely with learning technologists is an effective way of "surfacing" tacit knowledge held by clinical practitioners that has been acquired, then internalised – and consequently hidden - through experience. The formalising of this tacit knowledge allows it to become more immediately accessible as a learning opportunity and, significantly, suggests possible assessment avenues based on decision making skills and the synthesis and evaluation of knowledge; keystones of professional practice.

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