



**Singapore Healthcare  
Management 2017**

# Looking From Within – In-House Standardized Patients for Communication Skills Training

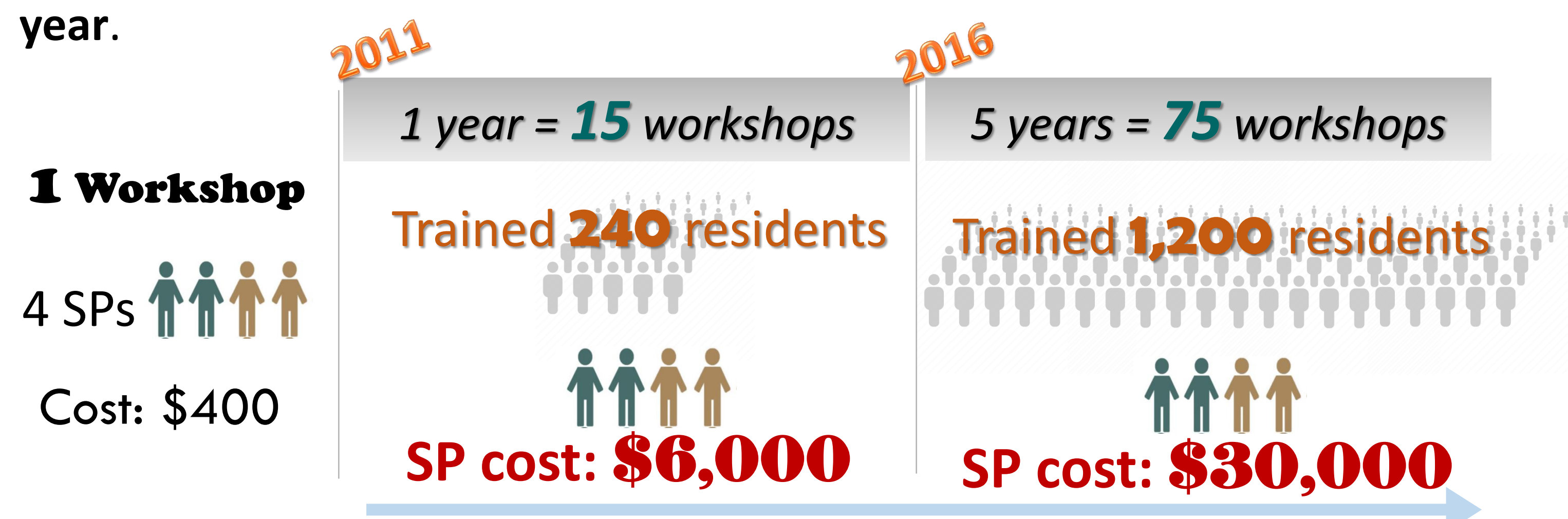
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Special acknowledgements to Prof Celia Tan, A/Prof Tay Sook Muay, Ms Goh Soo Cheng, Ms Leila Nasran, Ms Heng Ghin Ee, Ms Karen Koh, Dr Joselito Balingit, Mr Adrian Lu, Mr Tan Wei Ming, Ms Helen Yeo, and all the program executives and education administrators who took part in the SP training

## Background

The Centre for Resident and Faculty Development (CRAFD) has been organising role-play based Communication Skills workshops for residents since 2011 with an average of 15 runs per year. The objectives of the workshop are to equip residents with skills to better handle communication with the patients, which ultimately will increase patients' satisfaction rate and reduce cases of patient complaint. To date, about 1,200 residents have undergone such a training workshop. Running a workshop each time requires 4 different standardised patients (SPs) as educational aid, but there is only a small pool of about 6 external SPs for CRAFD to tap on. Each SP is also paid \$100 of service fee for each session they are engaged, incurring up to **\$6,000** of SP fees per year.



**AIMS**



To **sustain** the training needs of residents, as well as to build **capability** from within, it was necessary to develop our own SingHealth staff to step up as SPs, to be part of the training. This initiative not only aims to **increase** the pool of SPs, but also aims to **save cost** of engaging external SPs.

## Methodology

In 2016, CRAFD initiated to conceptualise an in-house SP Training Programme to train administrative staff as SPs. Health professionals across the disciplines (doctor, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, medical social workers, and administrators) came together to co-develop and implement the training programme. The inaugural programme consists of 2 half-day training sessions delivered through large group didactics and small group role-plays. 16 administrators from Education entities attended.



*Program executives donned on patient gowns to increase fidelity of training*



*Trainers included Group Director, Allied Health, Senior Consultant from Anaesthesiology, and Senior Manager of SingHealth SIMS*

## Results

The trained staff were gradually deployed in the Communication Skills workshop as SPs from 2016. Although external SPs are still engaged for the Communication Skills workshops, but the need to rely on them totally has greatly reduced as internal staff ramping up their participation in 2017. Post workshop evaluation ratings by residents showed no difference in the quality of the training whether external or internal SPs are used. As a result of the new model of staging internal staff as SPs, GME saved \$1,300 in 2016 and will save a total cost of \$1,400 in 2017.

**6 external SPs**

**18 internal & external SPs**



Before

After



Previous model

Trained 1,200 residents

SP Cost: **\$30,000**

New model

Trains 1,200 residents

Potential Savings: **\$30,000**

A year later, CRAFD again collaborated with trainers from allied health (occupational therapist & medical social worker) to organise a Community of Practice (CoP) session – SP Reunion, for internal SPs to share their experience. A survey administered showed that of all who responded, the staff have increased confidence and personal satisfaction as SPs.

### Survey Questions and Average Score

Question	Before Training	After Training
I understand the role of SP	3.4	<b>4.3</b>
I can confidently simulate a patient with medical condition	2.9	<b>3.8</b>
I can give feedback in the capacity of a patient	2.9	<b>4.3</b>
I am interested to be an SP	3.7	<b>4.6</b>
I feel satisfied being able to contribute as an SP	3.4	<b>4.4</b>

I enjoy the SP Training Programme  
Rating = 4.4

I enjoy the SP Reunion  
Rating = 4.3

From a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate the SP Training Programme  
**8.2**

## Conclusion and recommendations

To meet the aim of sustaining residents' training needs with internal capability instead of depending on paid, external SPs, CRAFD has successfully trained internal staff who are willing to volunteer their time and effort for improving medical education with the implementation of the inaugural SP Training Programme. Additionally, this initiative has enabled **cost savings**, **increased the pool size of SPs**, and also **enriched staff's work experience**.

