

Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Highly Realistic Training and Live Tissue Training for Navy Corpsmen

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Navy currently employs two types of trauma care training for Navy corpsmen: highly realistic training and live tissue training. Highly realistic training is a scenario-based training method uniquely crafted to replicate real-life combat settings. Live tissue training involves the use of live specimens (typically pigs or goats) to practice specific medical procedures. The objective of this study was to obtain subjective information regarding the perceived effectiveness and the strengths and weaknesses of highly realistic training and live tissue training. The sample consisted of 25 Navy service members assigned to the Independent Duty Corpsman (IDC) School, Surface Warfare Medical Institute, in San Diego, California. Participants completed brief surveys and semi-structured interviews. Results showed that participants perceived both types of training as equally effective on most dimensions. However, unique strengths and weaknesses were reported for each training type. While live tissue training may be better for practicing specific medical skills, highly realistic training may be better for preparing corpsmen for stressful operational settings. The Department of Defense has been tasked with phasing out the use of live tissue in military medical training; thus, additional research is needed to improve highly realistic training and extend its use to other military medical populations.

Table 5. Content Analysis Results: Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Highly Realistic Training for Corpsmen

	<i>n</i>	%
Prepares students for high stress, operational settings	21	84
The use of actors; the ability to practice procedures on live actors	19	76
The realistic, combat-like environment (e.g., chaos, special effects)	13	52
Boosts students' confidence for trauma care	12	48
Prepares students for trauma and mass casualty management	9	36
Cut suits	6	24
Deficiencies of the cuts suits	8	32
Insufficient medical supplies	6	24
Poor acting or actors do not always act like real patients	5	20
Lack of realism	4	16
Not great for practicing all hands-on medical skills	4	16

Responses are from the interview ($N = 25$). Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed. Responses given by 3 or fewer participants are not shown.

