Pharmacy Students Learn Appropriate Bedside Manner by Role Playing

“Beep,” “beep,” “beep” is the insistent sound of the IV pump that greets pharmacy students as they enter a mock hospital room that was set up by Michael Neville for the communications segment of his pharmacy skills lab at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy. The setting is further enhanced with a mock EKG machine, suspended IV bags and an authentic hospital bed, complete with a student playing the part of a patient wearing a hospital gown.

“The lab requires students to role play parts – the nurse, the physician, the pharmacist, family members, etc. – in order to learn how to appropriately communicate with a patient in a hospital,” said Neville, a clinical associate professor. “The noises, which are typically heard in a hospital room, are added to increase the level of students’ anxiety as they play their roles, while emphasizing the need for them to maintain professional composure as they collect important information from the patient.”

Neville encourages the students to treat the patients with respect. Such gestures as knocking on the door, approaching the bed from the right side, shaking hands and even sitting on a chair at eye level indicate regard toward the patient, he said. He also emphasizes that pharmacists are a vital part of the healthcare team and should act with confidence in their knowledge of drugs, drug interactions and disease state management.

Second-year pharmacy students from left: Sohini Veean, Rachel Schnorr, and Fei He