

Escape room provides life-saving training

On a cloudy Friday morning, three nurses at [OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center](#) in Urbana, Illinois, visit the Jump Simulation and Education Center on the University of Illinois campus. They're ushered into a mock patient room and are told to solve a series of puzzles while a 20 minute timer counts down. Not to mention the usual beeps and hurried voices of a busy hospital corridor being controlled from the room next door.

The prize? Not a restaurant gift card or a commemorative photo. Rather, the trio unlocks defibrillator pads to use on the "patient" – a manikin appropriately named Anita Shock.

No, this isn't your traditional escape room.

The effort – technical name "gamification of simulated environments" – is part of advanced cardiac life support training for OSF HealthCare Mission Partners (employees). The innovative approach is the brainchild of OSF HealthCare clinical educator Ashley Bruens. She spent a week creating the scenario, crafting each puzzle in great detail.

"They would use their knowledge about [heart] rhythm to solve one puzzle. They would use information about medications and what indications they're needed for, for one puzzle," Bruens explains. "There was one about what we call H's and T's, which are reversible causes of cardiac arrests. They will look at symptoms and presentations."

Bruens calls the escape room her passion project, and she's not alone. She says more hospital systems and universities are seeing the benefits of taking training away from computers and books and toward hands-on, puzzle-solving activities.

"In an emergent situation, it's important to have good communication, good team-working skills, and good delegation skills with the people involved in that team so that everybody is doing something pertinent that's going to help the patient," Bruens says.

You can count registered nurse Laura Hauersperger among the supporters of those concepts. She was in the group of three who took part in Bruens' game.

"It was a way to add in a fun learning element in a real-life situation that we deal with," Hauersperger says.

"You're kind of getting that hands-on learning, and so many people learn much better by hands-on learning," Hauersperger adds. "And you have that knowledge base of 'I've done this before. I can do it in this current situation. And I feel more comfortable and confident with it.' And I think that's an ideal way to train medical professionals."

At OSF, [innovation is encouraged](#) to make care better and easier for patients and providers. That includes coming up with agile solutions designed to meet every day needs, including developing simulations, such as what Bruens devised, to improve retention of life-saving skills.

Bruens says she'll continue to think outside the box for training. More escape rooms and even tasks incorporating virtual reality could become common across OSF HealthCare.

And as for the “patient” Anita, she received her life-saving shock from defibrillators with four minutes to go on the escape room timer.