Second Life

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Background/Purpose of the Technology
Second Life is an internet-based, virtual 3-D world (Web 2.0/Web 3-D dynamic computer-based application), produced by Linden Labs, Inc., in which individuals from anywhere in the real world can interact. This immersive learning environment has been used successfully for medical and public health education. Second Life has been used to model doctor-patient relationships, teach clinical diagnosis, train for disasters, and even virtually tour the human anatomy. In Second Life, users are represented in a virtual world by their avatars. An avatar is an online, self-created, animated characterization of the user that can act in any role (doctor, patient, nurse, or teacher) and perform programmed tasks.

Where to locate:  www.secondlife.com

First steps in using: (How-to)
• Second Life program is available for download free of charge at www.secondlife.com.
• Requires computer/monitor, internet connectivity, and audio input/output.
• Register for account creating username and password for login.
• Create your avatar.
• Welcome Island: Guided interactive tutorial that assists with control of your avatar’s physical navigation using the keyboard. This area is designed to quickly teach you the basics of Second Life including walking, zooming with your camera, chatting, standing/sitting, flying, and teleporting to preferred locations.

Proof of Principle
An oral board examination offered by the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) is the second step in the board certification process for residency-trained Emergency Medicine (EM) physicians. In the current format, examiners and candidates must travel to Chicago and patient cases are administered face-to-face in order to assess candidates’ competencies in the practice of EM. Residents at this academic EM residency program participate in annual mock oral examinations conducted in the traditional format (face-to-face interaction with proctor) in preparation for the oral certification examination. We explored the use of Second Life virtual simulation technology to administer mock oral examinations to EM residents. Examinees (physician avatar) verbally interviewed the proctor (patient avatar) for historical details and physical exam findings. A collection of pertinent diagnostic data was created in PowerPoint with individual slides subsequently loaded onto an image viewer in SL. The image viewer was controlled by the faculty proctor, allowing diagnostic data (initial and repeat vital signs, laboratory reports, and diagnostic imaging including ultrasound) to be displayed in the virtual examination room when requested by the examinee or at appropriate times during the case. Residents found Second Life to be a user-friendly, realistic venue for simulated patient encounters. Application of Second Life virtual technology is a potential alternative to traditional mock oral examinations for EM residents.

Article citation that shows outcomes: