Old operating rooms used to train future medical professionals in Roanoke

Medical students participate in disaster drill

ROANOKE, Va. - Complete strangers filled some of the operating rooms at Carilion's Roanoke Community Hospital Friday.

Students from Carilion Clinic, Jefferson College of Health Sciences and Virginia Tech's School of Medicine became one team during a live disaster simulation.

The exercise is used to test the ability to communicate among students from various health care disciplines.

From the time emergency responders get to a patient at a scene to the time doctors get a patient on the operating table, those in the medical field have to trust each other.

"In the operating room, they won't know each other most of the time," said program director John Ratcliff.

That's why Ratcliff said these simulations are so crucial.
"It doesn't get any more real than this," he said.

Two operating rooms located on the 6th floor of the hospital were once used to deliver babies in the Roanoke Valley.

Now, they serve as a classroom for future medical professionals.

"Everyone has their own role and they’re working together in that team role and communicating the needs for each member," said Ratcliff.

Ratcliff said it takes more than one person to save a life.

"The best experience is having the hands-on experience," said Jefferson College of Health Sciences President Nathaniel Bishop. "Through the semester they have been learning the theoretic behind the programs they are in."

WDBJ 7 interviewed freshman Juan Monterrey as he was sterilizing his hands for the mock surgery.

He said these exercises have had a huge impact on his education.

"Oh, the first time I was terrified," he said. "It’s something so simple, but it’s so easy to mess up."

Everyday materials like foam, string, mesh and real cow bones are used to simulate veins, tendons, ligaments, muscles and skin layers so the student’s don’t mess up when they get into their full-time positions.

"I'm trying to let them take control and to figure a lot of it out on their own and guide them as little as possible," said Ratcliff.

According to a Carilion spokesman, this type of education is known as "inter-professionalism" in the health care world.

Roanoke has become a leader in the simulations and will be recognized later this year for it.

Carilion is scheduled to host the 2015 Collaborating Across Borders, also known as CAB, which is an international conference.