STATE Magazine



February 2025 In the News

# Virtual reality transforms crisis training for nurses at American embassies abroad




Resident nurse Emmy Hill demonstrates the new virtual reality emergency training program used by nurses at post to enhance their patient care skills, Nov. 27, 2024. Photo by Arielle Erillo

By Arielle Erillo

The Bureau of Medical Services (MED) has embraced virtual reality (VR) as a means of providing immersive, real-time emergency training for MED staff around the world. Developed in partnership with VR software company Augmented Training Systems, MED's new training platform creates realistic, hands-on emergency scenarios designed to replicate the stress and confusion of a real-world crisis.

"For decades, MED has been training in emergency response using traditional tools, which often featured demonstrations and static scenarios," said MED's Director of Overseas Nursing Glenda Siegrist. "With this VR program, we are providing our team with an experience customized to our workplaces and designed to strengthen collaboration, communication, and effectiveness. It's a game changing moment."

The virtual environment replicates the interior of a typical embassy and incorporates noise, lights, and unanticipated challenges while assessing and timing trainees' responses. Whereas the software was developed to correspond to MED's specific needs, the hardware is the same as one might see in any living room or recreation center in the country, centered on an Oculus VR headset.

To date, MED has introduced this new training platform to nearly 20 posts worldwide, with the aim to equip all posts in the coming years with the necessary hardware to complete this transformation in emergency training. By embracing this cutting-edge technology, the Department of State is ensuring that its medical professionals are equipped to handle emergencies—no matter where they happen.

*Arielle Erillo is a public affairs specialist in MED.*