

911 Dispatcher Heroes Save Manikin (again and again)

A Report from the University of Washington Northwest Center for Public Health Practice

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During dispatcher continuing education courses in Fall 2012 (and as part of an ongoing study led by Dr. Hendrika Meischke, from the University of Washington School of Public Health, and funded by the Medic One Foundation) all 911 dispatchers at Valley Communications were given the opportunity to participate in a 3 minute cardiac arrest simulation role-play where one person was the dispatcher and the other was the rescue bystander of a SkillReporter manikin “victim.” The manikin recorded information (such as depth and rate of compressions as well as rescuer hand position) and performance data was shared after each session with participants.

Devora Chavez and Scott Stangenes (both at the UW’s Northwest Center for Public Health Practice) worked with Cleo Subido & Pam Bryson of King County EMS, as well as leadership at Valley Communications to coordinate and facilitate the simulations and feedback to dispatchers about their CPR performance. Dispatchers also completed a short, anonymous survey about their experiences handling CPR calls and their reflections on the simulation.

Review of 107 surveys showed that most dispatchers (83%) handled one or more CPR calls in a month (Figure 1). As part of CPR instructions dispatchers are asked to count with the callers as they provide chest compressions; 85% thought this was helpful or somewhat helpful (Figure 2).

Figure 1. How frequently do dispatchers receive CPR calls?

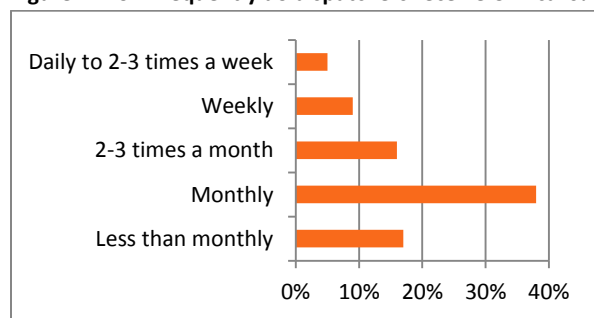
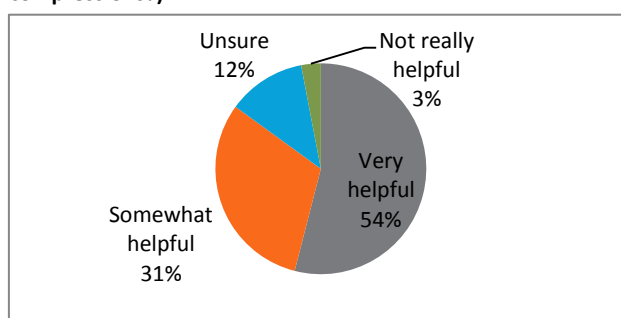


Figure 2. How helpful is counting with the caller (during compressions?)



The idea for this simulation activity came from talking with dispatchers and supervisors at Valley Communications, who suggested that a hands-on experience would help them understand the caller’s experience of doing bystander CPR. Almost all of the survey respondents found the simulation training useful, with many comments stating that it was helpful to see actual performance data (not usually a part of CPR trainings). During post-simulation discussion, there was consensus that three minutes of CPR was challenging (even exhausting!) and many remarked that they will have a lot more sympathy for callers who ask “Are they almost here?” after a minute or two of doing compressions.