Profiles in Simulation: Melissa Lowther, AS, CHSOS
Programming the Program

As technology changes the face of simulation in healthcare, Simulation Operations (Sim Ops) Specialists will be leading the way.

And that is a very exciting prospect for Melissa Lowther, Simulation Operations Specialist, AS, CHSOS at Oregon Health and Science University. Melissa, along with so many others in the field, got into simulation “quite by accident,” she said.

With an education background in technology, her first job was through a temp agency, and she was charged with running various software and audiovisual systems for Linfield’s School of Nursing simulation program.

Three years at Linfield led to a position at OHSU.

“I don’t know exactly when it happened but at some point, Sim Ops married my love of technology with being able to peripherally help people,” she said. “We were doing good work and making an impact, and it wasn’t just about running technology. It was more than just a passing job; I was invested a lot more than that.”

Being involved with SSH practically from the beginning has helped. She has attended several IMSH and SimOps meetings. Lowther is a CHSOS and is now serving as the planning chair for SimOps 2018, which will be held in Portland. She is also a content co-lead for the Technology Operations knowledge track for IMSH 2019 and a member of the CHSOS Readiness Advisory Group.

“SSH is really what pushed me through those first couple of years because it’s daunting not coming from a medical background,” she said.

But today, she sees more schools developing training programs and more recognition of how simulation can improve medical education.

“We sort of experiencing the virtual reality/augmented reality boom in our industry,” she said. “A lot of people are getting into 3D printing and making their own task trainers. There is a big push to adopt new technologies -- for open sourced information. We’re seeing people posting their 3D printing plans on hubs that others can download.”

And that new front in healthcare simulation will trigger an increased demand for people to manage the technical side.

“A simulation operations specialist is an integral part of that team. There are people coming into the field intentionally, and that’s a paradigm shift,” Lowther said.