Unlike many professionals in the healthcare simulation field, Jennie Struijk’s entire career has been dedicated to it; in this case, her specialization is in the use of Standardized Patients (SPs). Struijk’s years of involvement and passion for simulation has provided several opportunities for her to become a leader in the field.

Struijk is the Clinical Skills and Assessment Manager at the University of Washington where she serves as the Director of the UW Health Sciences Standardized Patient Program. The use of SPs involves people who role-play in various scenarios for training and education.

This exciting field was emerging when she began in 1993 and three years later, Struijk started a listserv to connect people around the world who were working with standardized patients. Today, more than 500 people on the listserv regularly connect to share educational materials, case histories and program management suggestions.

Struijk was also a founding board member of the Association of Standardized Patient Educators (ASPE) in 2001, and in 2011 joined the new Standardized Patient Affinity Group in SSH, eventually serving as both vice-chair, then chair for the group once it became a Special Interest Group. Earlier this year, Struijk was appointed by SSH President Christine Park to serve as an At-Large Director of the SSH board.

“One of the biggest benefits SSH offers is this great melting pot of resources for simulation professionals – webinars, the journal, regional conferences and of course IMSH.” Struijk said. “To walk around IMSH and see the different products and services that exhibitors are demonstrating and the new material being presented by our members to their peers is very energizing.”

And she is excited about the future of standardized patient uses and new developments.

“The more that they become familiar, the more creatively they are being used. Much of the interesting work these days combines multiple simulation modalities to create a rich and realistic environment for teaching, team-training and assessment.”
Struijk stresses this as one of the unique benefits of an organization such as SSH. “It’s easy to get stuck in your own simulation silo. IMSH, SSH regional and specialty conferences, SimConnect and the various interest groups all provide ways for professionals to share ideas, materials, best practices and to find colleagues for multi-institutional teaching and research efforts.”

One new way SSH is helping to promote simulation “on the ground” is a new initiative for 2017 – Healthcare Simulation Week. “I’ve had the opportunity to serve as the Board liaison to the Media and Communications Committee, and to watch their work in launching a new way to promote our work in our own organizations and to the public at large. I’m looking forward to this year’s launch, and to watching it grow in the future.”

Struijk encourages all SSH members to consider service within the organization, whether by joining an interest group, committee, participating in SimConnect forums, serving as a mentor, or running for a seat on the Board of Directors. “SSH is growing quickly and we need voices and perspectives from all areas of simulation, at all levels of the profession. I learned a lot during my time in the SP SIG, and even more during my first few months on the Board. Plus, it’s really just all been a lot of fun with some very interesting colleagues.” Struijk’s board term continues through IMSH 2019.