

CASE STUDY

Basic Life Support in Obstetrics: Building Clinician Competence & Confidence in Normal Labor and OB Emergencies

BLSO was piloted to 36 students in OHSU's PA program on June 25, 2012. In a pre- and post-course survey, each student was asked to rate his or her experience levels in BLSO's eight content areas.

Rapid Gains: The following table shows the percentage increase of participants' competency levels in eight common OB emergencies after taking BLSO. *

	Increased Competency After BLSO
First Trimester Bleeding	↑ 27.1%
Postpartum Hemorrhage	↑ 60.5%
Emergency Breech Delivery	↑ 66.0%
Delivery of Premature Baby	↑ 50.7%
Preeclampsia/Eclampsia	↑ 54.5%
Shoulder Dystocia	↑ 72.2%
Maternal Resuscitation	↑ 56.2%
Newborn Resuscitation	↑ 55.2%

* Based on student pre- and post-course self-evaluations using the following 4-point Likert scale: 1. No Experience, 2. Beginner, 3. Approaching Competence, or 4. Experienced-Competent.

Whether in rural critical access hospitals or urban clinics, Physician Assistants (PAs) may be called upon to assist a physician or a patient with an unanticipated labor and delivery. Second-year PA students at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) say they are better prepared for their upcoming OB-GYN clinical rotations and real-life experience, thanks to competencies gained from Basic Life Support in Obstetrics (BLSO®).

BLSO is a one-day course designed for medical, nursing and physician assistant students, pre-hospital providers and emergency department personnel. Course content focuses on improving the continuum of care, which can save the lives of pregnant and postpartum women and their babies. The BLSO program is adapted from the American Academy of Family Physicians' (AAFP) Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics (ALSO®) curriculum, the gold standard in obstetrical emergencies for 150,000 clinicians around the world.

As the pre- and post-course survey responses indicate, students who completed the evidence-based, multi-disciplinary course are more confident and comfortable with labor and delivery. Higher levels of experience and confidence lead to improved clinical outcomes and reduced medical liability risks. "The course provided very practical information that I can use in the field," said one OHSU student PA during one of three focus groups assembled after the course.

"I definitely feel more prepared to provide care for mother and fetus prenatally, during labor and postpartum," said another student. Additional participants echoed these comments and expressed "decreased anxiety about childbirth" as a direct result of BLSO training. Furthermore, when asked if they would recommend the BLSO course to a colleague, all participants said yes.

100 percent of course participants said they would recommend BLSO to a colleague.



BLSO provides hands-on training in normal labor and obstetrical emergencies.



BLSO teaches students how to manage shoulder dystocia (when the baby's shoulder gets stuck during delivery) and seven other OB emergencies.

Interactive Instructional Techniques Drive Greater Comprehension

After BLSO, many PA students also voiced appreciation for its small group, hands-on approach. Designed to drive higher comprehension levels and greater behavioral change through visual and kinesthetic teaching techniques, the BLSO curriculum incorporates videos, mannequins, mnemonics and case-based discussions. "It was very interactive," attests one student participant. Said another: "Surely, my behavior in any obstetrical emergency or normal delivery will be improved."

Because effective communication techniques reduce potential for adverse events when OB emergencies occur at home or en route to a hospital/birthing center, BLSO employs a team-focused approach that fosters more productive communication and healthier working relationships with hospital staff. To facilitate this approach, AAFP provides an Instructor Manual and requires that the course is directed and led by local experienced maternity care providers and ALSO-certified instructors.

The Course Director at OHSU was Harry "Chip" Taylor, Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine and medical director of OHSU's PA program. Five physicians from OHSU's Family Medicine department and one certified nurse midwife from OHSU's School of Nursing served as instructors. Students in all three focus groups responded positively to receiving specialized insight from family medicine/obstetrical experts.

BLSO Delivers Critical Gains

Through BLSO, students gain competencies that save lives, improve clinical outcomes, reduce liability, and foster more productive communication and healthier working relationships with hospital staff. In the words of the Founding Director of OHSU's PA program, Ted Ruback, MS, PA, "Based on student feedback, the course was a huge success and will provide our students with added confidence...I'm proud of the contribution our students have made to the future of the BLSO course by serving as the initial pilot program for this worthwhile training."