

IT²EC Best Presenter - Cheryl Lockhart, Registered Nurse, and Senior Military Advisor, SimX



Colonel (Retd.) Cheryl Lockhart presents 'Optimization of virtual reality medical simulation scenarios for operational competency and multi-disciplinary team training'.

In the world of military and defence where precision and communication are paramount, a range of demands and challenges need to be met. One such challenge is the need to have adequate numbers of suitably qualified, well-trained medical personnel to support front-line operations.

Colonel (Retd.) Cheryl Lockhart is a champion of the research for adequate medical training in the military field. A retired USAF Nurse Corps officer with over 30 years of military medical service, and a Registered Nurse, she shared with us her team's research of the viable solutions to meet demands in field medical training.

Cheryl's paper addressed the importance of virtual reality for team training for multidisciplinary medical teams in the military.

Cheryl's presentation was memorable, engaging, and innovative. The IT²EC Committee were particularly impressed with her energy and on-stage presence. So, we sat down with her to see how she felt about being named IT²EC 2024's Best Presenter.

Q: How was it to participate in IT²EC this year?

A: *It was wonderful! I enjoyed the entire process. What I liked most is that when you did the presentation, the audience wore headphones so they could hear you and that was helpful, especially with all the background noise of a large conference. I thought it was run very well.*

Q: What were your memorable moments from the show?

A: *I liked the networking receptions because I went there not only as a presenter but as an exhibitor, and I found that was helpful. I enjoyed the talks and presentations, especially when PEO STRI individuals joined NATO Generals for a panel.*

It was a very good conference for my team. There was a lot of international interest as well and the whole thing worked out very well.

Q: Congratulations on winning Best Presenter for IT²EC 2024! How do you feel?

A: *What an honour! I truly enjoyed the presentations, and I was surprised and honoured when they told me I got the Best Presenter Award. It is a very prestigious group, so to be chosen amongst all those other presenters was just amazing.*

Q: Do you have any tips for other aspiring presenters who want to present at IT²EC next year?

A: *Know your presentation front to back. Bring the passion - if you have developed something it is because you had the passion to do it, so bring that passion to your presentation. This passion that you bring will engage your audience because you are essentially trying to communicate that you “did this thing” and you think that it is wonderful.*

Do not be afraid to be comfortable with the audience and help them see why what you did is important.

When I was talking about some of the new things that we are looking to do based on what I presented, there was one lady in the audience who was a British nurse with the Ministry of Defence. She asked me why we did this, and I thought to myself “You are my spirit animal” because she was exactly the audience was thinking of. It created a bond, and the presentation engaged the audience so, that was awesome.

Q: Can you briefly explain the topic of your technical paper and presentation?

A: *At the time I carried out the pilot study, I was still an Air Force officer. I oversaw 160 nurses and medics in an outpatient facility and their day-to-day role was ambulatory care with healthy patients. If we must deploy them into a military scenario, they need to have those skills on hand. They need to be competent in those skills, so we do virtual reality training with them.*

So, we thought, let us do a project to see if we can use virtual reality to increase their team skills.

One thing we learned was that doing the training individually siloed them and prevented them from learning how to work as part of a multidisciplinary team.

Q: Why was the topic covered in your paper important for the defence and security industry as a whole?

A: *When we deploy individuals, they must be able to function as a team. We must train as we do to fight. We need fifty people who can work quickly right from the get-go as teams to take care of our wounded warriors coming in from the battlefield. So, we have got to make sure that they are not only competent in providing care but can do so within the team and the environment that we are going to send them to.*

Q: What are the present challenges in this subject area covered by your paper?

A: *My paper focused on a very small pilot study and involved the resources I had at hand; I would love to see somebody do it on a bigger scale. Another limitation was, at least in the American military domain, that the time for training versus time to take care of patients differs.*

VR can train them; the setup time and time to run through the scenarios is significantly less than setting up a big mannequin. However, it needs to be a leadership priority. You need the time and prioritisation to train for an eventuality. People always train on what they are doing and don't always focus on what they potentially could be doing, so that's the challenge.

The other challenge is it is a new technology and you have got to educate people; you have got to be willing to give them the time to get comfortable with the modality for it to be effective for them.

And I guess no matter what military you are, funding is a huge challenge.

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We would once again like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Cheryl on winning the Best Presenter award for IT<sup>2</sup>EC 2024. We look forward to announcing a new winner at IT<sup>2</sup>EC next year.

See you in Oslo!