

NEWS RELEASE



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The Wellmark Foundation supports University of Iowa's SIM-IA to provide lifesaving clinical training and strengthen rural health care

Backing highlights The Wellmark Foundation's ongoing commitment to improved health outcomes for rural Iowans

Des Moines, Iowa (Aug. 19, 2025) — [The Wellmark Foundation](#) has partnered with the University of Iowa College of Nursing's Simulation in Motion-Iowa (SIM-IA) program to further strengthen health care delivery in rural Iowa communities.

SIM-IA is a mobile clinical education program that delivers immersive, on-site simulation training to equip first responders and other health care professionals with the skills to improve patient outcomes. The investment by The Wellmark Foundation will expand the reach and frequency of the training provided by SIM-IA, reflecting The Wellmark Foundation's commitment to improving health outcomes in rural communities.

"Wellmark believes that where you live should not determine the quality of care you receive. Knowing SIM-IA addresses many health care needs across rural Iowa, we are excited to partner with the University of Iowa College of Nursing to broaden their ongoing program," said Laura Jackson, executive vice president of health improvement at Wellmark and chair of The Wellmark Foundation. "Our investment is intended to remove the barriers of cost and access to critical, hands-on training for our dedicated rural first responders and health care providers. This training instills greater confidence within care teams enabling them to respond effectively to medical emergencies and creating better patient outcomes."

Rural Iowans face serious health care challenges, including fewer providers, limited access to medical training and a growing shortage of maternal care. More than half of Iowa's counties lack obstetric services, and many emergency responders lack access to hands-on clinical education. The Wellmark Foundation's \$5.3 million investment in SIM-IA directly addresses these gaps and broadens SIM-IA programming to ensure 86 rural and urban-mixed Iowa counties receive training at no cost at least twice per year, with one session focused on maternal health.

"The SIM-IA program is transforming how health care professionals in rural Iowa practice their skills and access continuing education," said Julie Zerwic, dean of the UI

College of Nursing. “ We look forward to partnering with The Wellmark Foundation to expand the program and continue bringing simulation-based education directly to communities, where we are not only improving clinical skills and emergency response, but also building stronger, more confident care teams.”

SIM-IA's on-site delivery model brings advanced simulation training directly to rural hospitals, emergency agencies and first responders, eliminating the need to travel to centralized facilities and the associated costs. Training scenarios include high risk obstetrics, trauma care, cardiac arrest, maternal and infant health care, and other critical situations individual communities may experience.

With one in three Iowans living in rural areas, SIM-IA is a critical step toward ensuring all Iowans have access to high-quality health care. For more information about SIM-IA, visit sim-ia.uiowa.edu.

About the UI College of Nursing

The [UI College of Nursing](#) has a long history of excellence in nursing education and caring for the health of Iowans. Established over 125 years ago, the college offers undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate education and is highly regarded in both research and clinical education. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is currently ranked No. 4 in the country, and six graduate programs are also ranked in the top ten.

About The Wellmark Foundation

The [Wellmark Foundation](#) is a private, nonprofit foundation created by Wellmark, Inc., to help Iowans and South Dakotans lead healthier and more meaningful lives. The Wellmark Foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

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