Introduction
Problem-based learning (PBL) has become a foundation educational method at medical schools across Australasia, developing core scientific understanding and fostering a self-driven learning approach. Recently simulation techniques have been introduced for clinical and communication skills learning, typically conducted in parallel with PBL. The educational benefits of simulation are multi-faceted and well known, but its utilisation separately from the format in which students learn about health and disease may reinforce the division students perceive between the patient as a 'person' and the patient as an 'illness'.

Methods of Research
This project explored the introduction of a high fidelity simulation into the PBL experience for 2nd year PBL groups by removing the standard case material and replacing it with interaction with a trained simulated patient. PBL groups were required to elicit the history and physical signs from the patient (with a high-fidelity manikin used for invasive/dangerous procedures). Lab results were provided as appropriate.

Results of Research
Qualitative information was collected before and after the intervention. The use of a 'real patient' made the PBL scenario more realistic to students and reinvigorated the PBL experience for both students and facilitators. Students reported a subjective benefit in learning outcomes.

Conclusions
This research indicates that the incorporation of simulated patients into PBL at an appropriate stage can increase the impact of PBL and has the potential to increase medical student awareness of the patient as 'a person with an illness' and not just as a new disease.