Background/rationale: Sharing educational resources, specifically virtual patients (VP’s), among medical schools, is a way to improve education. However, several cultural aspects may have an impact on the development and the use of VP’s.

What was done: As a part of the eViP-project, 30 Romanian medical students, with previous training exclusively in Romanian and good understanding of English, participated in a pilot study with VP’s. We used three cases developed by our faculty with WebSP player. Every case had two identical versions, English and Romanian. Students were randomly assigned two different cases, one English and one Romanian. The students logged to the cases through the Internet from home. Interestingly, the average time per case was longer for the Romanian versions of VP’s (55.7+/–21.3min) versus English versions (48.2+/–18.8min). We also found high differences for correct diagnosis and treatment plan among Romanian and English VP’s. The diagnosis was correct in 13 of the Romanian VPs and 9 of English VPs, incomplete in 7 Romanian and 9 English cases and wrong in 2 Romanian and 4 English cases. The student answers were in Romanian for all Romanian versions and for 19 out of 22 English VPs.

Conclusions: We found unexpected high differences of student performance on Romanian and English versions of VP’s.

Take-home messages: Further studies are necessary to refine those differences and to understand their significance. VP’s could play a role in addressing the cultural diversity that exists in the society and increased mobility of healthcare professionals, students and patients.

Keywords: Virtual Patients, VP’s, Language Proficiency, VP’s Cross-Cultural Use, Web-SP