

Interdisciplinary Educational Approaches for Preparing Healthcare Teams of the Future

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Introduction

The Joint Commission¹ and Institute of Medicine² identify ineffective healthcare communication as the primary cause of medical errors, patient harm, and sentinel events. Interdisciplinary communication between team members “tends to be housed in discipline-specific silos”³ with an increased chance for misunderstanding between disciplines as it relates to safety⁴. Interprofessional teamwork is defined as “cooperation, coordination, and collaboration characterizing the relations between professions in delivering patient-centered care”⁵.

These two educational programs were designed and implemented to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations among undergraduate healthcare students.

Interdisciplinary Case Study

Goals to increase students:

- understanding of teams.
- awareness of interprofessional communication.
- mutual respect of other healthcare disciplines.

Description:

- Nursing, Child Life, Nutrition, Pre-OT & Pre-PT, Social Work
- Unfolding case study—acute care, rehabilitation, & home care phases
- Multidisciplinary student teams collaborated to and answer discipline specific questions

Outcomes: There was a statistically significant difference in student’s pre/post Stereotypic Rating scores.

Relevance to Child Life

Association of Child Life Professionals Strategic Plan 2015-2018

- Values collaboration, honesty, and relevance

Strategic Drivers

- Standardization of academic preparation, clinical training, and competencies

Child Life Professional Competencies

- Child life students must learn
- “self-reflective professional practice” (p. 4)
- “to represent and communicate child life practice and psychosocial issues of infants, children, youth, and families” (p. 5)

Interdisciplinary Pediatric Simulation

Goals to help students:

- gain confidence in patient-centered care.
- facilitate interdisciplinary communication.
- enhance patient safety.

Description:

- Nursing, Child Life, Nutrition
- 4 Simulated Scenarios
- Medical professionals: medical doctor & respiratory therapist
- Actors portrayed parents
- Collaboration and critical thinking demonstrated
- Team debriefings

Outcomes: Students exhibited greater confidence and competence with interdisciplinary interaction

Student Feedback

“Conversing with interdisciplinary team members helped me understand the expertise of each member.” —Nursing Student

“Conversing with team members decreased hesitation to initiate conversation with team members.” —Nursing Student

“Getting to experience the pediatric simulation with nursing students was a great experience. It helped me to think critically in simulated real-life situations and showed me how interdisciplinary team members collaborate in the health care setting. It also allowed me to put academic knowledge from the classroom to use in simulated real-life experiences, which was very helpful and a unique experience.” —Child Life Student

“Another important thing I learned today was to incorporate the family in the child’s care and to assess the parents to see how they’re coping with their child’s disease.” —Nursing Student

“I also learned how to work as a team. We were working as a team of nurses, but we also had to work with the doctor and nutritionist. I am so glad I was able to do Simulation today, and I feel more prepared for starting my Pediatrics rotation.” —Nursing Student

“I think our entire group needed to work on explaining procedures better to the parents.” —Nursing Student

“Collaboration between and among healthcare professionals is essential for the delivery of safe patient care, and this collaboration must be fostered during the undergraduate years in order to fully establish for the future practice.” —Nutrition Student

“The interdisciplinary simulation experience enabled me to utilize the skills and education I have acquired in my upper division coursework as well as develop new understandings of multiple disciplines in the health care profession.” —Nutrition Student

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