“Meet the Professional” (MTP) Sessions:

- Although students interact with staff during normal daily activities, we also designed hour-long MTP sessions to bring students and site staff together to explore inter-professional roles and challenges at the training sites.

- Staff discuss their roles and responsibilities; their interactions with others; and consider effective and ineffective team behaviors and their consequences for patients and providers. Staff also offer insights about optimizing team-based care.

- Students ask questions, discuss concerns, and seek advice relative to the patient care they are observing and participating in.

- Separate MTP sessions are held for:
  - Medicine
  - Nursing
  - Pharmacy
  - Social work
  - Physical therapy
  - Palliative care
  - Nutrition services

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

- Individual
  - Students are evaluated individually on attendance, attitude, participation, and contribution to daily activities, as well as on leadership, communication and collegiality.
  - Student reflections on the value of the course and specific experiences were obtained in group dialogue and in writing.

- Team
  - Teams are assessed in terms of the interactions among team members and with the site staff.
  - Each team provides written and oral summaries of two patients of their choosing. Summaries include patient history, course in hospital or clinic, evaluation of multiple aspects of care needs, and short- and long-term care plans.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

A continual challenge is finding a 4-week block when students from the four professional Schools are available. Academic term lengths and start/stop dates differ among the Schools, making it difficult to offer this course more than once a year.

Student recruitment is also a challenge, mainly due to other, required courses and demands on students’ time.

We are finding creative ways to deal with some of these obstacles, such as giving each School flexibility to determine how the IP experience will be offered. For example, medical students take it as an elective block; pharmacy students, as an experiential education rotation; and nursing students take it as part of a year-long practicum course.

CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The IP course has been enthusiastically received by students, core faculty and site staff.

The Interprofessional Health Care Teams elective course provides a unique and exciting opportunity not only to educate students in different health care professions about the principles of effective team-based care but, critically, to place them in health care settings where they can observe and directly practice such care.

The Schools of Health Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh are developing strategies and additional experiences to advance interprofessional education. Much of what we have learned through constructing and running this IP course will serve to help guide these broader initiatives.

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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: TEACHING TEAM-BASED HEALTH CARE THROUGH AN INNOVATIVE, INTERPROFESSIONAL ELECTIVE

BACKGROUND

Modern medical care delivery increasingly requires coordinated teamwork by individuals in different professions.

However, students being trained within a profession are rarely afforded formal opportunities to explore the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and contributions of other professions, or to learn strategies for effective teamwork.

This can result in poor communication and inefficient team function, both of which negatively impact patient care.

The Institute of Medicine and other national health care organizations have identified interprofessional (IP) education and team development as key areas needing improvement.

OBJECTIVES

We have developed an intensive 4-week elective course that brings together advanced-level students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and social work to learn about and practice team-based care. The course runs 5 days a week.

Goals:

- appreciate the range and variety of services that are necessary to deliver optimum health care, and understand the importance of team function
- clarify the knowledge, skills, and resources that different professions bring to well integrated health care delivery
- develop an understanding and respect for the contributions of other professions
- explore overlapping vs. unique roles and responsibilities of different professions on a team
- learn to communicate constructively and efficiently with the team
- learn to design patient care plans based on shared input from multiple professions
- appreciate one’s own limitations and recognize when it is appropriate to seek advice or assistance from another profession

COURSE STRUCTURE & ACTIVITIES

- Clinically based, experiential learning is emphasized and interwoven with didactic sessions and small-group discussions.
- Teams of four students – one from each profession – are placed in either cardiovascular or renal services, which include organ transplantation.
- Students proceed through in-patient and out-patient experiences to explore interprofessional care delivery in different sites, as well as continuity of care across environments.

Didactics:

- On the first day of the course, core faculty:
  - introduce the concepts of interprofessional health care
  - help students explore and evaluate their own preconceptions and attitudes toward other professions
  - provide overviews of the education, training, roles and responsibilities of key professions
  - clarify the impact of effective vs. ineffective team function on patient care
  - provide initial guidance on ways to observe, assess and influence team interactions
- During the course, lectures are provided on topics relevant to students’ site-specific experiences.

Topics include:

- heart or kidney transplant surgery
- procuring organs & determining who gets them
- post-transplant care and immunosuppressive therapy
- hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis
- quality initiatives and patient safety

Small Group Discussions:

- Students within a team meet to teach each other about their professions, consider patients needs, and develop care plans.
- Students from both teams meet with core faculty once a week to share, assess and analyze the week’s experiences.
- Journal articles on IP health care are discussed at the weekly meetings.

Experiential Components:

- Training sites and their sequencing are selected for the cardio and renal teams, respectively. At each site the student team is assigned one or two patients to follow.
- Students are expected to investigate the short- and long-term challenges facing the patient and to learn how the on-site healthcare teams address those challenges. This is accomplished in a variety of ways including:
  - interviewing patient and family
  - reviewing hospital records
  - attending morning rounds, teaching rounds and patient care conferences
  - interacting with staff providing direct patient care
- For in-patient sites, students review charts in the morning, determine patient needs for the day, develop a team-generated care plan and seek feedback from regular staff.
- Other issues addressed are:
  - dietary and physical therapy needs
  - insurance and financial issues
  - optimizing continuity of care
  - discharge planning and implementation
  - palliative care
  - family and social issues