LEARNING OBJECTIVES

BY THE END OF THIS PUBLICATION, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

• DEFINE “INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION”

• UNDERSTAND IPEC’S CORE COMPETENCIES FOR INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

• IDENTIFY WAYS TO INCORPORATE IPE INTO YOUR COURSE OR PROGRAM
Evidence suggests that "IPE creates positive interaction, that it encourages interprofessional collaboration and that it improves client care" (Thistlethwaite, 2012, p. 62).

IPE may help shift some of the traditional hierarchies in medicine by helping students understand the knowledge and skills other disciplines bring to patient care. In addition, research suggests that engaging in interprofessional activities helps students focus on professional similarities rather than differences, fostering a team environment (Olson 2016).

Hagemier (2014) warns “Students who complete a health professions program without possessing the knowledge of and skills to engage in effective communication may be less likely to communicate with patients or fellow health professionals” (p. 2). Failure to engage our students in effective IPE may hinder their ability to function in the modern healthcare environment.

Beyond being an accreditation requirement, IPE offers “continuous development of interprofessional competency by health professions students and students in other professional fields as part of the learning process, so that they enter the workforce ready for collaborative practice that helps to ensure health” (IPEC, page 4). IPE activities may become part of the process of students developing their professional identity and viewing themselves as part of an interdisciplinary team rather than a solo practitioner, preparing them for the realities of clinical practice (Olson, 2016). DeMatteo (2013) suggests “As a result of major educational and workplace changes, students entering the health professions find themselves in the midst of major shifts in (1) what it means to be a professiona” and (2) what it means to practice in today’s clinical environment” (p. 28).

Thistlethwaite (2012) informs us “part of the rationale for IPE is to prepare students to be able to work in an often confusing array of professionals,” getting them used to interacting with various disciplines before they are in clinical practice (p. 60). Healthcare today is provided by an array of practitioners, which can be a difficult and often confusing array of professionals,” getting them used to interacting with various disciplines before they are in clinical practice (Olson, 2016).

Renscher (2016) tells us, “Successful interprofessional learning experiences allow students to practice coordination of care, team communication, and respect for and understanding of their role and the roles of other professions on the team” (p. 339). Specific guidelines on introducing IPE and validation of models are mostly absent from the literature (DiVali 2014). However, constructivist and transformative learning theories are gaining traction in IPE, involving activities such as active questioning, interaction, and application (Olson 2016). In addition, longitudinal experiences are allowing learners to develop relationships over time, forming an understanding of individuals from professions other than their own (O’Brien 2017).

Learning outcomes designed for IPE should be attainable only through interprofessional interaction (Thistlethwaite, 2012). Select or develop cases that have a teaching/learning point for each of the represented professions, which reinforces the interprofessional concept. Similarly, when developing discussion questions, work to encourage participation from all professions (O’Brien et al, 2017). Avoid discipline-specific jargon and empower learners to ask for clarification when terms are unfamiliar.

Facilitators serve as role models, as learners observe interactions amongst teachers from different professions “and often incorporate language, behaviors, and attitudes into their own practice based on what they observe” (O’Brien et al, 2017). Be mindful in your interactions with other professions, including the way you speak about them when they are not present. Your words and actions help shape the way learners behave in practice.

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