

Developing an Interprofessional Collaboratory Course to Foster Team-based Learning for Students of Health Professions: Benefits and Challenges

Abstract:

Numerous national and international professional organizations have acknowledged that interprofessional collaboration is critical to the safety, effectiveness, timeliness, and efficiency of health care. Although it is widely accepted that no single discipline can meet in practice all of the needs for clients, especially for those with complex conditions, education across health professionals remains nested in siloed environments. This approach is beginning to change across professions. One example is the American Occupational Therapy Association (2015), which has embraced interprofessional education (IPE) as an important component of entry-level preparation. This stance is reflected both in current standards used to accredit occupational therapy programs administered by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) and to an even greater extent, in the new ACOTE standards effective in July of 2020. As well, Principle 6 of the Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics (2015) addresses the importance of interprofessional relationships and cites standards of conduct aimed to strengthen the effectiveness of these relationships. Occupational therapists are working to address interprofessional education strategies to develop such relationships (Kilgo, Vogtle, Aldridge, & Ronilo, 2019; Moyers, Guthrie, Swan & Sathe, 2014).

In keeping with national and professional focus on interprofessional health provider education, The University of Alabama at Birmingham established a Center on Interprofessional Education and Simulation (CIPES). The Office of Interprofessional Curriculum, one of three offices within CIPES, received internal funding to create a web-based learning collaboratory to foster interprofessional teamwork in healthcare education. This poster will document the progress of and challenges encountered in engaging an interprofessional design team comprised of students and faculty working in partnership to develop the on-line collaboratory course.

Representatives from five programs including public health, dentistry, occupational therapy, social work, and nursing, partnered with instructional designers in the Division of eLearning and Professional studies, to develop the course. Using a case-based format as the frame for engagement across professions, key interprofessional education objectives related to teamwork, communication, roles and responsibilities, and values and ethics provide the course foundation. In addition, discipline specific learning objectives and activities are embedded in the course.

The case, a pediatric patient with chromosomal disorder, is presented in modules representing four specific life stages; early childhood birth to 5 years, childhood 6 – 12 years, adolescence 12 – 17 years, and adulthood 17+ years. Family history is presented as a “Family Tree” using pop ups with brief history to introduce intergenerational family members. Students will view the case at each life stage and be provided with profession-specific questions and activities to guide

their steps in care planning across the lifespan. Links to librarians are provided to support students with resources as they work through the modules, resolving case challenges.

Benefits to partnering with interprofessional students for course development include valuable insight into logistical challenges and learner engagement strategies from the perspective of learners. The complexity of bringing together students from five different schools across a large urban campus to learn together in a virtual team environment presents challenges. These have included identifying a diagnosis that incorporated all disciplines; sequencing discussion boards so that students can develop their discipline-specific plans prior to presenting information to the larger community of health profession students in the course; and the process of overseeing interprofessional discussion boards.

The goal is to pilot and evaluate this course with a small number of students in each program in 2019/2020. The process of course development has required considerable reflection beyond course logistics. The ability to communicate professional values and roles is complex; enabling health profession students to work out ways to do this while in their formative education should lay the groundwork for future interprofessional collaboration.