What do 3 years of evaluation data tell us about the benefits and challenges of introducing IPE to early learners?

Shawne Soper, PT, DPT, MBA  ●  Kelly Lockeman, PhD  ●  Sharon Lanning, DDS  |  Virginia Commonwealth University

**BACKGROUND**

- There is uncertainty about the optimal time to introduce interprofessional education (IPE) in health professions training.
- One argument asserts that students should learn to approach care collaboratively early in their professional development by fostering their understanding of other professions’ scopes of practice and de-mystifying professional stereotypes.
- Others argue that IPE should not begin until students have a better understanding of their own profession and the context in which their profession delivers care.

**METHODS**

- To explore this debate, we examined data from early learners enrolled in a required, semester-long, team-based Foundations of Interprofessional Practice course, which meets once a week for 90 minutes.
- Each year, approximately 500 students from 6-7 professions are enrolled.
- Content and activities focus on interprofessional collaborative practice conceptually, with emphasis on professional roles and responsibilities and teamwork.
- At the end of each semester, a course evaluation survey is used to assess student satisfaction, perceptions of interprofessional clinical education, and also to take suggestions for improvement.
- We examined trends in the responses to quantitative and qualitative survey items over a three-year period.

**RESULTS**

**Perceptions of IPE Before and After the Course**

(For students enrolled in 2017. Results similar for all three years.)

| Pre/post difference was significant on all subscales (p < .001) |
|---|---|
| Interprofessional Teamwork and Team-based Practice (Score Range: 4-20) |
| Roles/responsibilities for Collaborative Practice (Score Range: 3-15) |
| Patient Outcomes from Collaborative Practice (Score Range: 3-15) |

- Mean SPICE-R2 Score (Zorek et al., 2016)
  - Pre-Course Score 4
  - Post-Course Score 5
- (Cohen’s d = 0.232)
- (Cohen’s d = 1.021)
- (Cohen’s d = 0.345)
- Largest effect size

**Student Satisfaction with Teaching and Learning**

(Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed each year over 3 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quizzes were directly related to assignments, discussions, and other planned activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course content was clearly aligned with the learning objectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning objectives were clear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assignments were helpful in acquiring a better understanding of interprofessional care.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods were effective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrative Student Feedback**

- Late afternoon timing is universally unpopular.
- IPE perceived as less important than graded coursework required in their own programs.
- Some students question whether first year trainees are appropriately positioned to advocate and educate others about their own profession.
- Some content is perceived as common sense.
- Scenarios and cases are perceived as contrived.
- A common suggestion is to include guest speakers who can discuss interprofessional collaboration in their own workplace.
- Lack of clarity in grading rubrics and inconsistency with faculty feedback create confusion for students.

**CONCLUSIONS**

1. Early learners benefit from IPE through an increase in positive attitudes, but we struggle with student motivation, satisfaction, and learning.
2. Despite course improvements, consistency in reaction over time challenges us to rethink assumptions and explore creative methods to engage with learners.
3. Students need rich, meaningful, and challenging examples that expose them to interprofessional practice without feeling contrived.
4. Faculty with concrete experience in interprofessional practice are needed to contextualize learning for first-year trainees.