Students’ Responses Regarding Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Introduction
Research indicates the use of interdisciplinary teams increases practitioner job satisfaction and improves patient outcomes.

An interdisciplinary approach
• creates meaningful connections and relevance (Senn, McMurtie & Coleman, 2019)
• results in a more holistic plan of care for patients (Carty & Day, 1993)
• increases team members’ knowledge of each other’s areas of expertise (Carty & Day, 1993)
• increases the team’s related collective competencies in each field (Bouwma-Gearhart, Perry & Presley, 2014)
• increases performance levels of students than with a departmentalized program (Irvin, 1997)

Providing students interprofessional education opportunities allows them to develop skills and core competencies making the transition to the workforce more seamless.

Method
Northern Illinois University offers students an annual interdisciplinary case study event. An individual with a complicated medical history serves as the case subject and participants discuss their interdisciplinary roles and responsibilities based on the case.

After the event 233 students from seven disciplines submitted survey responses reflecting on the three key ideas they learned from the event as well as the ways they will use the information and skills learned in their future careers.

Participants included:
• 18 Audiology students
• 24 Speech-Language Pathology students
• 21 Mental Health Counseling students
• 26 Medical Laboratory Science students
• 20 Nursing students
• 49 Nutrition/Dietetic students
• 47 Physical Therapy students
• 18 did not specify their discipline.

Results
Each of the 233 respondents provided items learned. Their responses were coded into the following six thematic categories:

1. Increased knowledge of discipline scopes of practice
2. Increased appreciation of interdisciplinary approach and collaboration
3. Increased knowledge of discipline-specific terminology
4. Importance of using a holistic approach and providing patient-centered care
5. Improved confidence in the referral process
6. Improved confidence to work with other professionals

Concepts learned from the case study event

Participants indicated how they would use the information in their future career. The following six themes resulted from their responses:

1. Desire to collaborate with other professionals
2. Confidence and knowledge of when and to whom one should refer
3. Desire to use a holistic approach and patient-centered care
4. Knowledge of other discipline’s scope of practice
5. Increased confidence in their own scope of practice
6. Will apply other discipline’s knowledge to their own practice

Ways students will apply knowledge to career

Purpose
This study was conducted to determine students’ perceptions of an interdisciplinary approach to a case study event.

Research Questions:
• What knowledge did students report learning?
• How will students incorporate the knowledge gained from the case study into their future career?

Discussion and Future Directions
The participants provided insight on ways they will use interdisciplinary collaboration in their careers. Additionally, participants reported higher confidence in their own scope of practice, as well as other’s discipline’s scope of practice. They had an increased desire to collaborate with other professions and gained knowledge of when and to whom one should refer.

Students commented on the importance of a holistic approach through interdisciplinary collaboration, and they gained more confidence to advocate for better patient care.

This study indicates the case study event had an immediate positive impact on student learning regarding interprofessional collaboration. In order to determine if such events have long term effects, longitudinal data will need to be collected. Feedback from the students will determine if the skills they learned through the case study were utilized in their careers.

References


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