

Chapter 10

Introducing Collaborative Care: Teaching Basics of Interprofessional Education in an Online Environment

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the development and implementation of an innovative course in interprofessional education (IPE), which ensures a large number and variety of health professions students have the appropriate foundations to collaborate. A description of the institution and the process of implementing interprofessional education is followed by a presentation of challenges and then solutions to address them in the creation of the course. Future research avenues in interprofessional education will be explored. This chapter will provide practical application of concepts for other institutions attempting to design and implement introductory interprofessional education for large numbers of students.

INTRODUCTION

Interprofessional education (IPE) has been identified not only as an ethical obligation for health care delivery, but is now being recognized by accrediting bodies as critical to health sciences education (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016; Zorek & Raehl, 2013). Academic institutions are now called upon to ensure students know how to work effectively in teams to promote collaborative care (Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel, 2011). Health sciences educators are challenged to develop graduates who are identified as “collaboration ready” for clinical practice (Gilbert, Yan & Hoffman, 2010). Concurrently, higher education delivery is changing with online learning and increased class sizes (Bower 2016; Kena, et al., 2015; Morrison, 2000; Association of American Medical Colleges, 2016). Integrating interprofessional education for all of an institution’s learners presents unique challenges to academic institutions, raising questions such as:

- Where do educators begin in ensuring students have the appropriate foundations to begin to collaborate?
- How do educators offer a quality interprofessional learning experience to a multitude of learners?
- Where in the curriculum is it best to begin to introduce the concepts of interprofessionalism?

In this chapter, the authors will focus on an innovative, online course introducing the basic concepts of interprofessional education and interprofessional collaborative practice to a large number of learners from across multiple professions.

BACKGROUND

Creighton University, a Jesuit, Catholic university in the midwest, offers seven health sciences programs including Dentistry, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Medicine, Nursing including both undergraduate and graduate programming, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy and Physical Therapy. In 2012, Creighton announced a strategic initiative to address the need for IPE focused on addressing emerging disciplinary accreditation requirements. (Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel, 2011).

At Creighton, an IPE Steering Committee with faculty from each of the seven programs was charged with completing an inventory of IPE offerings and developing a proposal for an interprofessional (IP) infrastructure and additional IP courses/activities to meet IPE accreditation standards for each discipline. The inventory revealed there were substantial grass roots efforts for IPE in small pockets within the university but expansion of the current offerings would be required to meet the needs of an IPE curriculum for all health professions students. The inventory identified mostly voluntary interprofessional service learning activities and a couple interprofessional electives in which small groups of students participated. Despite the small number of offerings, the inventory revealed a strong faculty passion and desire for IPE, but many barriers in place that prevented its expansion.

It should be noted that Creighton has a long history of participation in interprofessional education including past funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Yet, many of the existing service activities highlighted in the inventory and infrastructure did not meet the require-

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