

Student Reflections: Insights on Interprofessional Team Learning

JoAnne Davies, Interprofessional Education Manager, Health Sciences Education & Research Commons; Elizabeth Taylor, Associate Dean Professional Programs & Teaching, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine; Christopher Ward, Associate Professor, Laboratory Medicine & Pathology; Rosemarie Cunningham, Clinical Lecturer, Laboratory Medicine & Pathology
 All authors are from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Research Study Overview:

- At the end of a large IP Team Development course we invited all students (1000+) to complete an online research consent form indicating that participation in this study would be anonymous and not impact grades.
- A research assistant gathered and anonymized 100 course-end student reflection assignments that had received consent.
- A 4-person research team each reviewed about one-fourth of the assignments, using an established **Qualitative Data Analysis process** that had been used in previous studies at this university.
 - Read through all of the student papers in one sitting
 - Set the papers aside for at least a few hours or 1-2 days
 - Re-read the papers, highlight/underline comments that seem important, make notes in margin
 - Revisit the highlighted comments and notes, looking for areas of similarity (themes)
 - Using a sample Coding Sheet, write down Code #, Theme Title and Definition
 - Use the same code # and title for themes that are common across several areas of the data
 - After all researchers complete Coding Sheets, meet together to discuss and find overall common themes in the student assignments.

Course Overview:

- Twelve interprofessional health science programs on a university campus collaborate to offer a mandatory, multi-section course on **Interprofessional (IP) Health Team Development**.
- 1000+ students early in their programs, simultaneously take the course (10 weeks, one 3 hour class/week); the course is divided into about 25 seminar sections, each guided by a team of 2-3 facilitators (faculty members and/or practicing health professionals).
- This course represents the second major IP educational opportunity for students in these programs (the first was a half-day “IP Launch” in the previous term).
- Working in small IP teams, students learn effective team processes and

build IP competencies (communication, collaboration, role clarification, reflection, patient-centered care).

- The course is mainly experiential learning, only small amounts of didactic/lecture.
- Integrated reflection activities help students explore IP concepts.



Individual Written Reflection Assignment:

Students submit a 2-3 page written reflection at the end of the course. We provide an Interprofessional (IP) Competencies Self-Assessment and a Reflection Guide to serve as aids in completing this assignment. Areas we suggest students explore are:

- What have been your key learnings about interprofessional care?
- Have your thoughts about the course changed from those indicated in your initial reflection at the beginning of the term?
- How did the functionality of your team progress throughout the term?
- Comment on your development as an individual and as a team in the various team activities, such as team discussions, role plays, assignments, Standardized Patient interviews and team presentation project.

Interprofessional Reflection Guide



Results:

Researchers identified areas of common learning that students mentioned in their reflections. Overall we found that students were positive about their course experience, they found it more useful than expected, and they would apply what they had learned in the future. Students said they were proud of both their individual and team development in IP skills and that they expected lifelong learning in these areas. Common themes:

- **Collaboration/Teamwork:** valued: actual practice in building a team, experiencing team growth, developing team dynamics, using team roles to improve team function, learning the importance of incorporating different perspectives
- **Professions:** learning about/respecting other health professions, scope of practice, role clarification/overlap, breaking down stereotypes, networking/making meaningful connections among professionals; exposure to Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM) disciplines in the CAM Fair
- **Patient Centred Care:** exposure to actual patients was enlightening - important to consider patient goals, view patient as a whole person and as a member of the health team
- **Communication:** importance of communication within team and with patient; skills improved greatly through the term; valuable learning to give and receive constructive feedback
- **Reflection:** learning from analysis after events, value of reflection for improving future actions, planning to incorporate the habit of reflection into professional practice
- **Individual Development:** valuable to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses, experience personal growth
- **Simulations:** role plays or conferences with standardized patients provided practice/insight into potential real world situations
- **Tools/Techniques:** course provided reusable tools/techniques, e.g. conflict management, error disclosure, SBAR
- **Facilitators:** students appreciated the mentoring, feedback, modeling, personal practice stories from their section facilitators

Suggestions for course improvements identified:

- Students in disciplines with smaller numbers were disappointed that their profession did not have an obvious role in most case studies.
- Students who had clinical activities the same day and were taking an evening section found the day too long – difficult to maintain attention for the entire 3 hours.

Conclusions:

- The Reflection Assignments provide evidence that many students are “getting” what we had hoped they would learn; they value the practical team experiences and the early exposure to IP collaboration – this is evidence that we are on the right track with the experiential/active learning approach, keeping didactic/lecture to a minimum.
- The course supports the development of IP team competencies early in pre-licensure health science programs, and placement of this type of learning is critical early in professional development.
- Students realize the importance of IP teamwork and expect more such experiences in their programs - further IP educational opportunities for students are needed, which we are actively working at as we develop the **IP Pathway** throughout our health science programs.

