Poster 7: Education
Forming Communities of Practice; Education of Health Professionals in Interprofessional Settings

Saturday, March 13, 2010

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This presentation describes a qualitative study analyzing the perspectives of health profession students, teachers and administrators involved in an interprofessional learning experience, a year-long fellowship studying developmental disabilities. Participants represent seven health care disciplines.

Interprofessional education is called for in all health profession’s curricular models and standards, but in practice there are many hurdles to implementation. A unique feature of this study is the use of a situated learning theory, communities of practice, as a lens for interpretation. The study represents a new focus for the development of effective interprofessional learning experiences.

The qualitative study utilizes the principles of grounded theory. Data was obtained from semi structured interviews and researcher memos to identify themes and concepts. The interviews were taped, transcribed and entered in a qualitative data program, NVIVO7. Data was analyzed by coding for themes and then looking for relationships and linkages. The major concepts of the theory of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) were used as a starting point in analysis.

The Results relate to three areas; community-building, meaning-making and feeling respected. The findings indicate the participants developed an interprofessional community of practice. This study offers an organizing conceptual framework for thinking about effective interprofessional communities of practice.

This study is the first step in the development of a model of an effective interprofessional community of practice. Results lead to criteria to guide program development and strategies for successful implementation in educational settings and guiding principles for development of IP community in the clinical setting.