A Qualitative Exploration of Interprofessional Education: A Report on Student Perceptions and Experiences at Widener University

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Widener's History
Interprofessional Learning Opportunities
- 1992 – SHSP Formed at Widener University
- 1997 – Student Interdisciplinary Day Task Force
- 1998 – First Student Interdisciplinary Day
- 1999 – Expansion: Created Didactic Modules
- 2000 – Faculty & Student Debriefing Sessions
- 2000 – Research: Knauss et al
- 2001 – Created Video Based Case Study Using a Simulated Client
- 2002-2005 – Multiple Curricula Modifications
- 2006 – Research: Gilin et al
- 2008 – Revised Case Study & Video – Client with an Actual Disability
- 2008 – Research: Gilin et al
- 2009 – Research: Gilin et al

Rationale for the Need for Interprofessional Learning Opportunities
- Importance of collaboration in practice
- Growth of the need for interdisciplinary teams in multiple settings
- Universities are obligated to provide those learning experiences that provide the knowledge, attitudes and skills to function effectively in interdisciplinary settings

Curricular Model

Understanding Teams Process
Acquire Knowledge of other Professions
Effective Interdisciplinary Practice
Team Identity Values & Ethics
Communication
**Student Learning Objectives**

1. Understand the different structures and functions of a multidisciplinary teams;
2. Understand the process of communication within a multidisciplinary team and with other related systems (i.e. agency administration, outside caregivers, client/patient/consumer, significant family members);
3. Learn the different terminologies that are utilized in different types of multidisciplinary teams;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of professional values and code of ethics that guide professional working relationships;
5. Demonstrate skills in utilizing problem solving methods to resolve conflict within the team or between the team and outside systems;
6. Demonstrate skill in conducting a multidisciplinary assessment;
7. Demonstrate skill in implementing a multidisciplinary treatment; and
8. Demonstrate an understanding of several means of evaluating treatment outcomes and the team’s success.

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**Learning Modules**

Three Sessions

- Session 1: Introduction to Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- Session 2: Introduction to the Clinical Case
- Session 3: Student Interdisciplinary Day – Simulated Team Conference

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**Student Interdisciplinary Day Simulated Team Conference**

- Case Introduction
- Interdisciplinary Group Meeting
- Discipline Specific Group Meeting
- Final Interdisciplinary Group Meeting
- Debriefing & Wrap-up

**Case Considerations**

- Real client with multiple disabilities
- Disciplines represented within SHSP
  - Clinical Psychology
  - Education
  - Clinical Social Work
  - Physical Therapy
- Promote interdisciplinary discussion

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**Case Study**

**Sarah**

- 17 year old female
- Lives with single mother
- Final year high school
- Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy

**Limitations**

- Mobility
- Activities of daily living
- Multiple learning disabilities

**Strengths**

- Above average intelligence
- Motivational student
- Support system

**Research**
Purpose
The purpose of this ongoing research is to explore the impact of interdisciplinary learning experiences on students enrolled in a school of human service professions.

Preparing Students For Interdisciplinary Practice

Knowledge and Understanding of Interdisciplinary Teams (ITS)

Group Participation Skills (IPES)

Student Perceptions of an Interprofessional Learning Experience

Key Themes from the Research
1) Better understanding the professional roles of other team members;
2) Increased awareness of professional role overlap among some of the disciplines;
3) Competition and conflict among disciplines & difficulty resolving differences;
4) Appreciation of the need for effective leadership;
5) Importance of collaboration in providing services;
6) Development of professional competence and confidence.
1. BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROFESSIONAL ROLES OF OTHER TEAM MEMBERS.

“… everyone should be educated in each discipline, it helps the (collaborative) process run smoother”.

“…having a representative from physical therapy was useful because I had not really worked with physical therapists before and it provided useful insights.”

“I learned what physical therapy does, a little about what educators do and a little about what a social worker does but I'm still very vague about all of it”


2. INCREASED AWARENESS PROFESSIONAL ROLE OVERLAP AMONG SOME DISCIPLINES

“I learned that professional roles can overlap. Students seemed surprised when others took their role.”

“Psychology and social work, although different in their focus, often overlapped in their approach to accomplishing a given goals. Physical therapy’s contribution were the most distinct from the others.”


3. COMPETITION AND CONFLICT AMONG THE DISCIPLINES

“Students learned that their role is at times in conflict with other professional roles, which was seen in (the) challenging interactions and (the) competing priorities expressed.”

“I felt like there was a constant power trip going on with everybody.”

“I felt like everyone was fighting for air time and fighting (when) one discipline made a suggestion that the other disciplines would think wasn’t important.”


4. APPRECIATION OF THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

“Differences were not necessarily resolved but ‘set aside’. I voiced the reality of a power struggle between disciplines as being the white elephant in the room.”

“I was surprised that no one knew how to readily integrate all disciplines’ contributions into an action plan. There was a breakdown in the process…”

“All of the disciplines learned that they had no idea how to structure/run the meeting. The process stalled. Students asked each other what to do.”

“Groups should not be facilitated by physical therapy students … (differences of opinion) were not effectively resolved. The team leaders failed to lead.”


5. IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION IN PROVIDING SERVICES

“Each discipline was able to give a unique perspective based on their education and experiences in their particular roles. Each discipline’s unique perspective provided a more well rounded and holistic solution to the challenges at hand.”

“Each discipline brings a lot more to the table than they think. I feel that we get too caught up in our own little physical therapy, education, social work or clinical psychology worlds to realize how much we can offer the group.”

“I was delighted that each discipline had equal interest and input into the case.”

“I really liked working with physical therapy students. I gained a lot more information about what they do. I also found them easy to work with and thought that they really helped to inform the psychologists and other disciplines about how to better our work. They also seemed very interested in gathering useful information from psychology.”


6. DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE

“I was surprised the whole team listened to my opinions … this gave me confidence.”

“I learned that I knew more than I thought and was able to deal with many different aspects of the client and her family.”

“The thing that surprised me the most about myself is that I could answer the questions from the other disciplines. I learned that I could bring more information to an interdisciplinary meeting than I had originally thought.”
Revised Curricular Model

A Survey of Attitudes and Perspectives on Interdisciplinary Practice Among Students Enrolled in a School of Human Service Professions

Changes in Attitudes Toward Interdisciplinary Teams

Has the Experience Changed You

Team Working Skills Improved from Being on the Team

Interprofessional Curriculum

Gilin et al, unpublished data
Group Discussion

Summary

- Incorporation of a case based on a real person enhanced the learning experience
- Made progress toward achieving the identified learning objectives
- Positive student learning experience
- Next steps …

Questions

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References