Hearing from our Health Mentors: Impact of a Longitudinal Interprofessional Education Program

Ashley Baronner, BS, MSII
Faculty Advisor: Lauren Collins, MD
Elena Umland, PharmD, Carolyn Giordano, PhD, Edwin Lim, BS, PharmD Candidate
Introduction

- Mixed-methods study to evaluate the perspectives of the Health Mentors in the Jefferson Health Mentors Program (JHMP) relative to impact of program

- Correlate these responses to the Interprofessional Education Collaborative’s (IPEC) Competencies
  - Values/Ethics
  - Roles/Responsibilities
  - Interprofessional Communication
  - Team and Teamwork
Background: JHMP

- JHMP is a two-year interprofessional education (IPE) curriculum
- Students from six healthcare professions participate
- Health Mentor (HM) is an adult of any age who lives with one or more chronic conditions or impairments
- Goal is to utilize IPE interventions to promote high quality, patient-centered, team-based care of chronic conditions
Background: Big Picture

- One half of adults in the United States suffer from one or more chronic health conditions (Ward et al. 2012)

- Early exposure to people living with chronic disease and to other health professions’ roles/expertise may ultimately lead to achievement of the Triple Aim
Background: Literature Review

- Senior mentor programs are designed to promote geriatric education and patient-centered care (Eleazer, Wieland, Roberts, Richeson & Thornhill, 2006)

- Limited literature (Towle et al. 2010)
  - Program effect on students
  - Patient outcomes

- Patients report raised self-esteem and empowerment (Wykurz and Kelly, 2002)

- Senior mentors enjoy the companionship with students (Towle et al. 2010)

- Pilot study findings: may promote skills such as attentive listening, empathy, and a holistic approach to care
Methods: Quantitative

- HMs who completed the JHMP in Spring 2014 were mailed a short survey
- HMs were asked to evaluate student teams according to IPEC core competencies, to rate their own health status and to describe any change in health outcomes by participating in program
- Program impact was evaluated using a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree)
  - Questions grouped by IPE core competency
Methods: Qualitative

- HMs were asked to identify examples of impact of the program on:
  - Overall health
  - Health behaviors
  - Knowledge of wellness or self-care; home and medication safety; and health and wellness goals

- HMs were also asked to list 2-3 ways the program could be a better experience in the future

- 10 HMs participated in a focus group

- A thematic analysis and frequency count of open-ended responses were completed
Results: Demographic Information

- **Response rate:** 93/120 (77.5%)
- **Average (+/- SD) age:** 66.9+/-14.4
- **Gender:** 62% female, 38% male
- **Ethnicity**
  - 64.1% White/Caucasian
  - 28.3% Black/African-American
  - 5.4% as Asian/Pacific Islander
  - 1.1% Hispanic
- **Average number of years a HM participated in the program:** 3.39+/-1.4
Results: Quantitative

- HMs rated the student teams positively relative to all of the IPEC competencies’ four domains
  - Average (+/- SD) responses
    - Values/ethics: 3.93+/-0.36,
    - Roles on the healthcare team: 3.82+/-0.42
    - Communication: 3.69+/-0.44
    - Teamwork: 3.80+/-0.50

- Mentors rated their satisfaction with the JHMP 9.13+/-1.43 (10=Highest, 1=lowest)
Results: Qualitative

- HMs reported learning useful information pertaining to:
  - Home safety
  - Self care
  - Medication usage and safety
  - Nutrition
  - Exercise
  - Sleep patterns
  - Goal setting

- 62/93 open-ended responses pertaining to personal health status
  - 50% positive, 27% negative, and 23% neutral

- 54/93 open-ended responses regarding health behaviors or ability to manage health changed as a result of volunteering in this program
  - 93% positive, 7% neutral
Results: Major Themes

- **Improved health status**
  - “I’ve been more active on a regular basis”
  - “I am willing to listen and take charge of my health”
  - “I feel more accountability to follow through with my health goals”

- **Learned health behaviors**
  - “I take my medications daily and exercise most days”
  - “Taking medications better, keeping up with doctors, and eating healthier”
  - “More alert to my needs as a senior”

- **Wellness and self-care**
  - “I’ve always understood the importance of wellness and caring for myself, but each student offered suggestions pertaining to their field of study”
  - “Suggested drinking more water and doing more exercise”
  - “Simply paying more attention to yourself”
Results: Major Themes

- **Home safety knowledge**
  - “Securing rugs and installing grab bars in bathrooms among other examples”
  - “The team pointed out my loose area rugs, and that I held on to the handle of the door of my refrigerator when I climbed up a small ladder. Very unsafe!”
  - “Recommended a carbon dioxide detector”

- **Medication safety knowledge**
  - “Organized medication and set schedule of when to take it”
  - “Where to store medications”
  - “Something I knew, but making sure to use a monthly sorter helped on days I could not remember if I took my AM pills”
Results: Major Themes

- Health and wellness goals
  - “The students helped me set attainable goals for exercising, now I need to implement!”
  - “Goal set loose weight- lost 10 lbs February 2014, April goal met”
  - “The discussion reinforcing contacts and my health care providers and improving personal support”
  - “Journal keeping gives you a better pattern to eating and taking medications”
Results: Major Themes

- Program Impact
  - “I found compassion, which encouraged me to continue fighting for my health”
  - “I think it’s a great program. I believe the students that I worked with have a better understanding of chronic illness in such that it affects everyone differently.”
  - “Perfect experience for me as a patient with advanced cancer. Students were considerate and open to my sharing how I felt about end of life decisions, including how health care professionals can enhance the quality of life of someone like myself. Enjoyed the experience.”

- Recommendations
  - HMs suggested that the program incorporate additional visits and facilitate ongoing communication
Results: Focus Group

Community
- Interprofessional healthcare teams
- Improved management of chronic conditions
- Achievement of Triple Aim

Student Teams
- Achievement of IPEC core competencies
- Improved understanding of chronic conditions

Health Mentor
- Sense of fulfillment from opportunity to give back
- Improved personal health outcomes
Results: Focus Group

- “I lost 12 lbs, I never walked before program, started with 5 minutes, I am also off certain BP meds.”

- “I taught my students that we have feelings and deserve to be treated as a person not just medical condition.”

- “The students questioned my partner about what it was like to live with someone with chronic illness, and they demonstrated interest in my caregiver. I felt that this really showed empathy and insight.”
Discussion

- Mentors rate their student teams highly in all competency domains and express positive personal outcomes by participating in the JHMP

- Health Mentors strongly value their role in shaping future medical professionals
  - Mentors felt empowered by the experience
  - Mentors enjoyed the companionship of their student teams

- A team approach to chronic illness management may lead to a more positive mindset and better health outcomes in patients
Discussion

• Student teams who participate in a longitudinal IPE curriculum can have a positive impact on their Health Mentor partners
  
  • Mentors felt that the students successfully achieved the IPE core competencies

• The skills developed may promote empathetic, team-based, and patient-centered chronic illness care

• IPE curricular innovations like this one may help to teach students effective strategies for achieving the Triple Aim
Discussion Questions

- Do the *perceived* positive personal outcomes of the Health Mentors correlate with improved health outcomes?
  - If so, is this only a short term finding or long term impact?

- Does the JHMP improve the health outcomes of not only the health mentors, but also the future patients of students who have participated in the program?
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