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E. Adel Herge

Jefferson School of Health Professions, Thomas Jefferson University

Christine Hsieh

Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University

Tarae Waddell-Terry

Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University

Andrea McElroy

Jefferson School of Health Professions, Thomas Jefferson University

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Using an Interprofessional Clinical Skills Scenario in an Occupational Therapy Course

E. Adel Herge, Christine Hsieh, Tarae Waddell-Terry, Andrea McElroy

Jefferson School of Health Professions
Jefferson Medical College

Interprofessional education (IPE) is being adopted increasingly more in the health care education field.¹ The literature cites benefits of interprofessional teamwork such as appreciation for the expertise of other health care practitioners, enhanced communication skills related to teamwork,² higher quality patient care^{3,4} and improved patient outcomes.^{5,6} One of the goals of the Eastern Pennsylvania-Delaware (EPaD) Geriatric Education Center is to create geriatric interprofessional education for medical, nursing and health professions students. The Center developed an Interprofessional Clinical Skills Scenario to facilitate development of communication and collaboration skills. The Interprofessional Clinical Skills Scenario focuses on an older adult who is hospitalized for an acute stroke and is ready to be discharged from the hospital. The learning objectives for the students are to identify roles of professionals on the health care team, and to practice communication and collaboration skills through the development of a care plan and family discharge planning meeting. The Clinical Skills Scenario includes the development of care plan and conducting a family discharge planning meeting followed by feedback from standardized patient and family member, peers and faculty. The Clinical Skills Scenario was pilot tested in October 2009 with five students from medicine, nursing, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) and pharmacy.

In Spring 2010, faculty in the Department of Occupational Therapy incorporated this interprofessional educational activity into the Interdisciplinary Care Planning Course. The goals of the exercise addressed several of the course's interprofessional learning objectives.

The OT course in Interdisciplinary Care Planning is offered to entry level occupational therapy students in the Spring semester of their second year. This course provides students with a comprehensive look at interprofessional practice, focusing on the role of the occupational therapist on the interprofessional care team. Students examine the roles and responsibilities of other team members and develop skills necessary to work collaboratively with team members, patients/clients and caregivers. The Clinical Skills Scenario is an ideal learning activity as it provides students with a chance to practice skills in a life-like situation.

The Clinical Skills Scenario consists of several learning activities. Prior to the scheduled session students viewed a 20 minute video which demonstrated the roles of various disciplines (physician, nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist, pharmacist and social worker) responsible for a 76 year old female patient who was admitted to the hospital for an acute stroke. Students were grouped into interprofessional teams, reviewed the patient's chart together and discussed discharge care options for the patient. Teams then met with the patient and caregiver, who were portrayed by standardized patient actors, in a discharge planning meeting to discuss the care plan. Following the family meeting students had a short debriefing session with faculty and standardized patients regarding their performance as a team.

A total of 38 students in six teams from medicine, nursing, OT, PT and pharmacy participated in this learning exercise. Students completed pre and post surveys on their perceived efficacy towards hospital discharge planning, attitudes towards health care teams, learning experience and satisfaction with the educational activity. Student teams were also observed and evaluated by faculty, peers and standardized patients utilizing a checklist on team dynamics, communication and information sharing. The checklists and debriefing following the standardized family meetings revealed that the teams worked well together and acknowledged the patient and caregiver's personal and health care goals. On a scale of 1 to 5 [Poor(1), Fair(2), Good (3), Very Good (4), Excellent (5)] faculty and student observers rated the students with a mean overall team performance of 4.8. In the area of empathy and support regarding the patient and caregiver's feelings, concerns and goals the observers' mean was 3.8.

Students reported high satisfaction (mean = 4.8 on a 5 point Likert scale with 5 = highest satisfaction) with the team interaction among disciplines and reported a greater understanding of the vital role each discipline plays in caring for the patient. Students' anecdotal comments on the post test evaluation of the experience included the following: *"I learned the valuable roles that each team member has to offer the group as a whole."* *"This was a valuable experience to help us work (with) other disciplines and speak with a patient to better prepare us for the real world."*

Students also recognized the value of preparing and organizing before the meeting with the patient/family. “Meeting to talk about the format of the meeting, leaders, discharge status (and) options available to the patient and family (are) critical to the productivity of the (family) meeting.” Standardized patients portraying the patient and caregiver reported feeling supported by the team in their evaluations. One standardized patient wrote “We feel that the (team) cared about Mom.” Standardized patients gave feedback to students on their professional communication skills including questioning, listening, use of body language and information sharing. Mean ratings for these areas were as follows: providing clear questions (3), listening (3.6), use of body language (3.5) and information sharing (3.2).

In summary, after observing the session and evaluation, the authors determined that the Clinical Skills Scenario met the course objectives. Based on the evaluation data, the activity facilitated the students’ recognition of the important roles each profession plays in caring for the patient and in addressing patient/family needs through the development of a discharge plan. Additionally, the experience of working in a team was reported by the students as rewarding and beneficial in increasing their knowledge of teamwork in a health care scenario. Students reported enjoying the simulated discharge planning meeting learning activity and regarded this as a valuable part of their education. Details of the Clinical Skills Scenario can be found at EPaD Geriatric Education Center website at <http://epadgce.jefferson.edu/education5.cfm>.

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