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NEWSLETTER

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Jefferson Hosts Interprofessional Education Conference

Interprofessional approaches to practice have been suggested as a way to address the complexity and risks associated with chronic conditions related to the aging population in the United States. Interprofessional education (IPE) is fast becoming an accepted way to prepare future health professionals to successfully collaborate as members of health care teams. While there have been numerous definitions of IPE over the past decade, the one that is most globally accepted was developed by the Center for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE) in the United Kingdom. They define IPE as what "occurs when two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care."[1]

In response to this need for new models of care, in 2007 Thomas Jefferson University introduced the Jefferson InterProfessional Education Center (JCIPE) with the mission, "To promote excellence in health through interprofessional education and scholarship." The Center has developed a comprehensive approach to IPE, consisting of interprofessional preclinical/didactic education, clinical simulation and clinical education within team-care settings in a variety of venues, including Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals (TJUH). A major component of the Center's activities is the Health Mentors Program. Students from medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, pharmacy and population health are organized into teams of 3-4 students across two or three disciplines. These teams are paired with a health mentor: a volunteer, living in the community, with one or more chronic conditions. Each team meets with their health mentor four times a year for two years to understand the patient's perspective of care and to understand the roles of each discipline in delivering patient-centered care.[2] The Center held a one-day conference in October 2008 to share information about its activities with the larger Thomas Jefferson University community.

JCIPE held its second conference, "*Interprofessional Care for the 21st Century: Redefining Education and Practice*," on March 12th and 13th, 2010. Initially envisioned as a local and regional meeting, the conference soon grew into an international event. This came about, in part, as a result of papers delivered by many of the JCIPE leaders at national and international conferences and through their work with the fledgling American Interprofessional Health Collaborative (AIHC). There were 135 participants at this conference from across the US and Canada, including many from the Jefferson community. Five papers were presented on the Health Mentors Program, and another thirteen presentations and posters were given by individuals from both TJU and TJUH.

Dr. Joan Weiss, Director of the Division of Diversity and Interdisciplinary Education at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), delivered the keynote address regarding federal initiatives to expand interprofessional education in the United States. Dr. Weiss focused on programs at various universities that she considered exemplary, including the Jefferson Health Mentors program. She also discussed efforts that were underway to include a recommendation on interprofessional education in the forthcoming Healthy People 2020 report and highlighted recent Institute of Medicine reports related to IPE.

Dr. Madeline Schmitt, a recognized leader in IPE, gave the opening address on Saturday morning. Dr. Schmitt is Professor Emeriti and Professor of Nursing at the University of Rochester, and is a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and National Academy of Practice. Her experience in IPE spans three decades, and she writes and consults internationally on the topic. Dr. Schmitt provided a historical perspective of IPE, explained the constraining factors that have impeded its implementation, and described recent changes that have led to a shift in thinking regarding its importance. Lastly, she discussed the pedagogy of IPE, including curricular strategies, learning methods, basic elements of IPE and the competencies required.

Prior to the main conference spotlighting Jefferson's contribution to the interprofessional health education movement, The Center for Collaborative Research hosted the inaugural meeting of the American Interprofessional Health Collaborative. Modeled after a similar organization in Canada, AIHC is attempting to partner with other large health organizations to lobby for the advancement of IPE in the US. This pre-conference meeting attracted over 85 attendees from across the United States and Canada, who came to share information about their programs through panel discussions and networking sessions.

In order to encourage interactive dialog among participants, the format for this meeting allowed for more personal sharing of IPE experiences instead of relying on a series of submitted papers. Participants reported that this format exposed them to more ideas that they could use for their own programs and was more effective than the more formal meetings. Because of the interest generated from this event, the AIHC Steering Committee is making plans to incorporate as a formal organization in an effort to become the leading voice of IPE across the country.

The level of excitement and commitment to IPE at both meetings was extremely high. The success of this conference highlights the importance of the transformation of the health care system to be more collaborative and more responsive to patient values. It suggests that the current movement toward increased interprofessionalization of health care is not a short-term trend, but has the potential to make lasting change in the way health care is delivered. It also highlights Jefferson's leadership role in facilitating this transformation, because of the comprehensive nature of the Health Mentors Program and the other activities conducted by JCIPE. Broader in scope than at many similar university programs across the country, Jefferson's programming has resulted in continuing requests for further information and advice from the leaders of JCIPE. ■

For more information on the Jefferson Interprofessional Education Center visit: http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/jcipe/

Kevin Lyons, PhD
Assistant Vice President for Program Evaluation and Director, Center for Collaborative Research

Christine Arenson, MD
Associate Professor, Family and Community Medicine and Co-Director, JCIPE

Molly Rose, RN, PhD
Professor, Jefferson School of Nursing and Co-Director, JCIPE

Carolyn Giordano, PhD
Senior Research Analyst, Center for Collaborative Research

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