

February 2012

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Recommended Citation

Michalec, PhD, Barret (2012) "Exploring and Evaluating Interprofessional Training: A Brief Overview," *Collaborative Healthcare: Interprofessional Practice, Education and Evaluation (JCIPE)*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://jdc.jefferson.edu/jcipe/vol3/iss2/4>

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Exploring and Evaluating Interprofessional Training: A Brief Overview

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This paper provides a general overview of an upcoming evaluation plan with JCIPE that began this fall. This plan was constructed primarily because although numerous training institutions have constructed and implemented various courses and programs designed to provide students with extensive learning opportunities steeped in interprofessional education (IPE)¹⁻³, projects employing longitudinal and/or mixed-methods approaches to understanding the multi-faceted barriers to and facilitators of IPE within health professions training have been quite limited⁴. Similarly, few evaluation plans have attempted to unearth if and how students are exposed to interprofessional values outside of IPE-specific programs or how these team-based values may translate to students' later professional practice.

It is imperative to not only dissect the components of IPE programs and explore students' perceptions of teamwork training but also examine to what degree the charges put forth by IPE are retained by those exposed to these programs. Therefore, this forthcoming research endeavor serves a multitude of purposes: 1) to examine and evaluate elements of the *Health Mentors Program (HMP)*, 2) to explore the perceptions of students from different health disciplines regarding the *HMP*, interprofessional training within their discipline, and the value and status they place on other health care professions, 3) to better understand how students' may or may not engage in teamwork and collaboration during their professional practice, and 4) to highlight facilitators and barriers at Jefferson regarding the teaching and learning of interprofessionalism.

The sample for this project includes all entering (Fall 2011) students in each health profession (Medical, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy, Couple and Family Therapy) at Thomas Jefferson University. The projects' objectives are examined through both quantitative (series of surveys) and qualitative (in-depth interviews) methodologies. The surveys are utilized to properly measure students' perceptions of interdisciplinary education (IEPS)⁵, attitudes toward interprofessional health care teams (Heinemann Scale)⁶, stereotypes of other health professions (SSRQ)^{7,8}, and socio-demographic characteristics. Surveys will be administered to all students in September 2011, and again in May 2013. Students in programs that do not conclude after two years (Medicine, Pharmacy, and Physical Therapy) will be surveyed again at the end of their program. All students will be approached three years into their professional practice to complete a final survey.

In-depth, structured interviews with a sub-sample of students from each health care discipline will be conducted to:

1) investigate potential barriers and facilitators related to interprofessional education, 2) explore if and how aspects of the *HMP* and each disciplines' particular training may influence students' perceptions towards interprofessionalism. Interviews will be held towards the end of each academic year (April/May 2012 and 2013). Much like the surveys, those students interviewed whose programs do not end in two years will be

approached again to be interviewed at the end of their respective program, and all interviewed will be approached to be interviewed three years into their professional practice.

My previous research regarding the socialization and professionalization processes of those in the health care fields includes a two-year pseudo-ethnography of preclinical medical students, a one-year exploratory study with clinical nursing students, and a current study investigating if/how primary care practices engage in empirical/clinical research. Therefore, this comprehensive project not only fits with my research/methodological interests but also gives me the opportunity to work with the great team of scholars from JCIPE. This collaborative effort not only fills gaps in the current IPE literature (specifically the lack of longitudinal and mixed-method approaches), but extends the notion of "evaluation" to include examining interprofessional training within the students' own health discipline and the extent to which IPE values are maintained and cultivated in professional practice as well.

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