

From Interprofessional Education to Collaborative Practice: A Jefferson Alumna's Perspective

I graduated from Jefferson College of Nursing at Thomas Jefferson University in May 2015 and began my work as a perioperative nurse the following July. During my time at Jefferson, I not only participated in the Health Mentors Program (HMP), but was also given the opportunity to work closely with JCIPE and a group of students from other health care professions to refine and expand IPE offerings. We formed a student organization, now known as Jefferson Students for Interprofessional Education (JSIPE), which had three overarching goals:

1. Students will gain exposure to real-world collaborative practice teams
2. Students will learn about health professional roles and expertise in specific clinical settings
3. Students will gain practical tips and advice for working as part of an interprofessional healthcare team

For me, participation in JSIPE and HMP achieved all three goals and facilitated my transition into professional practice in a highly collaborative setting.

I entered the professional sphere as a "perioperative nurse intern" in a program designed for nurses new to the operating room. Many of us were new graduates, and some of the other nurses were intimidated by the prospect of working in such an intensely interprofessional setting. Although nearly all of them had been exposed to the idea of IPE, none of them felt that they had been prepared for its practical implications. My new co-workers were fascinated by the idea of the IPE Grand Rounds panel discussions that we hosted at Jefferson. They were especially interested in the concept of getting practical tips and advice for working as a part of an interprofessional healthcare team. Since then, I have approached the perioperative education team about arranging



an interprofessional panel for future intern classes and am hopeful that it may be incorporated into the program.

Although I knew that the opportunities that I had been given at Jefferson would help me as I transitioned into a professional role, I had no idea how directly my IPE experiences would apply to my practice. Every procedure in every operating room could be a case study in collaborative practice. I work as a part of multiple teams made up of nurses, surgeons, pharmacists, surgical technologists, radiology technologists, physician's assistants, and many others. Although we work together on a daily basis, I am amazed by how little each profession knows about the roles of the others. For example, three nurses who went through the perioperative internship with me had worked previously as surgical technologists. When they began their work as circulators, they were amazed by the amount and variety of work that the job required. Although they had worked with circulators for years in their roles as surgical technologists, they had never truly understood the nurse's role. They

believed that this lack of understanding had negatively impacted their practice in the past. I am extremely grateful that these nurses shared their experiences with the rest of us and helped us to better understand the role of the surgical technologist.

Recently, I have had the opportunity to apply what I have learned through IPE at Jefferson to make a positive change in my work environment. As circulators on the neurosurgery team, we work closely with a team of radiology technicians in two interventional radiology hybrid operating rooms. Due to a lack of communication and lack of understanding about each profession's roles in these rooms, both groups have become increasingly dissatisfied with, and in some cases resentful of, the way cases are run. Until recently, each group was unaware that the other was open to change. By breaking down our practice silos and reaching out to the radiology technologists, we were able to open lines of communication and come together as a team. We are currently in the process of reworking the staffing of these

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rooms and redefining the roles that each profession will play. Already I feel that we are in a position to better care for our patients and support each other.

I am very grateful for the emphasis placed on IPE during my time at Jefferson. I feel that it has given me a professional head-start and provided a framework for my practice.

I have been accepted into a Masters of Nursing program in Healthcare Leadership and I look forward to finding ways to continue my interprofessional education both professionally and academically. I hope that I can help to ensure that my IPE experience becomes the norm rather than the exception.

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