

Collaboration is a “Work of Art”

Abstract

The 2019 ‘Guidance on Developing Quality Interprofessional Education (IPE) for the Health Professions’ suggests that intentional IPE should be built with outcomes-based goals, deliberate design, and assessment throughout. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we created an art-based activity to initiate IPE early in the curriculum, in order to expose students to other professional colleagues, and also to raise awareness of how unintentional biases can be created before class activities begin. For that reason, we designed, implemented, and evaluated an interactive art event during the orientation process for incoming health professional students. In partnership with our colleagues at the Ackland Art Museum, students were given a series of art activities (back-to-back drawing, close looking and collective problem solving, and personal response) to engage them in raising awareness of their roles in healthcare, the value of teamwork and collaboration, and understanding the patient’s story through artistic design. Each activity was carefully planned with health professional experts and the museum directors for academic and university programs, and mapped to IPEC competencies. A formalized debrief was led by expert faculty in partnership with the art team. Descriptive themes (appreciation, value, respect, humility) and conceptual themes (communication, diverse perspectives, teamwork/team-based care, whole-patient care) were identified through qualitative analysis of open-ended questions, of how they ended up on this particular path.

THE NEED

In 2018, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNCCCH) established the Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice (OIPEP) to advance the University’s mission to create a diverse and caring workforce to improve health outcomes for North Carolina and beyond. For its first major undertaking, OIPEP sought out to design an innovative program for first year health professions students to introduce key concepts in interprofessional education. Evidence has



Photo of the “Collaboration is a Work of Art” activity courtesy of Dr. Meg Zomorodi, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

shown it is important to initiate IPE activities early in the curriculum (NAP, 2015); however this can prove challenging when students have minimal clinical experience, or frame of reference. Furthermore, it was important to identify an activity that was neutral and free of any perceived hierarchy, in order to maximize the learning environment. Our team partnered with the Ackland Art Museum, an established institution that serves as both a museum and academic unit for the University, to co-design a multi-faceted program using artwork in the Museum’s collection as a catalyst to teach effective communication, observational skills and the value of diverse perspectives.

Planning for the event began in June 2018 and was piloted in August 2018, at the opening of the fall semester. The event was attended by a total of 50 students: 20 from the school of dentistry, 17 from the school of pharmacy, 8 from the school of medicine, 4 from the school of nursing, and 1 from the school of public health.

BACKGROUND

Art has been shown to increase students’ observational skills, and increase their ability to conceptualize and make connections, promote critical thinking, and improve communication, facilitate reflection, and promote empathy and caring behaviors

(Pellico et al., 2009, Klugman et al., 2011, and Moorman et al, 2016). These findings aligned nicely with the goals of learning identified in the IPEC Core Competencies (2016).

METHODS

Using the 5-stage approach (ask, imagine, plan, implement, assess) of design thinking, OIPEP and the Ackland designed, implemented, and assessed a novel program that utilizes art as a way to engage students in thinking about the value of teamwork. ‘Collaboration is a Work of Art’ was piloted for 1st year students in the health professional schools who had yet to have a clinical experience.

Design

At the initial meet-and-greet for development, directors for the OIPEP and education specialists at the Ackland, got together to brainstorm ways to blend objectives and offerings. Synergy between the guided debrief, a technique often used in interprofessional simulation to draw out reflective learning, and the close looking methods used by Ackland educators to cultivate active-listening and collective problem-solving, was immediately evident. A protocol was developed based on three activities with strong synergy and alignment with IPEC competencies (Table 1).

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Table 1. Art-Based Activity and Objectives Aligned with IPEC Domains

Activity	Objective	IPEC Domain
<p>Personal Response</p> <p>Students receive prompts and search the gallery to find art that they feel speaks to the prompt.</p>	<p>Discuss how seeing and thinking differently can relate to an individual's future as a learner and ultimately as a healthcare professional. Students were able to identify shared values and discuss values related to ideal teamwork and collaboration (mutual respect, trust, etc.)</p>	<p>Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice</p>
<p>Back-to-Back Drawing</p> <p>Students pair up and sit back to back with their partner. Partner 'a' serves as the describer; partner 'b' will be the drawer (they will ultimately swap)</p>	<p>Experience and describe the ways we speak to others and listen to what others say.</p>	<p>Interprofessional Communication Practices & Interprofessional Teamwork and Team-based Practice</p>
<p>Close Looking and Collective Problem Solving</p> <p>Students sit in front of a work of art. Collectively, they look closely and unpack the work of art.</p>	<p>Experience and discuss ways we validate and/or seek understanding while talking to others.</p>	<p>Interprofessional Communication Practices; Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice; & Roles and Responsibilities for Collaborative Practice</p>

Recruitment

An online registration form was included in the orientation materials distributed by each school and was promoted by the Interprofessional Education Directors. Multiple days were offered to accommodate for student schedules and orientation needs. As this was a pilot, the activity was voluntary.

Implementation

An OIPEP staff member placed students in interprofessional groups to maximize

diversity of thought. On arrival, students were welcomed by school directors for OIPEP and the University's Assistant Provost for Interprofessional Education and Practice. After the welcome, students engaged in three encounters facilitated by the Ackland's education specialists. This was followed by a group debrief. The group debrief centered around three questions 1) What surprised you about this experience? 2) What is the greatest take-away from this experience, as it relates to teamwork and collaboration? and 3) What unanswered questions do you have following this experience? For each of these questions, follow-up questions were asked based on the group responses, allowing for rich discussion without a structured script.

Assessment

Qualitative data was obtained from an open-ended online survey. Questions were developed to reveal the participants' motivation for attending the event, what they liked about the activity, what they found surprising, what they will take away from the experience, and what suggestions or thoughts they had about scale and spread.

RESULTS

Sixteen students responded to the post-event survey. Respondents expressed overwhelming enjoyment of the activity. Motivations for participation revealed that students have a desire for early exposure to IPE and are eager to network across schools.

In both the debrief and the survey responses, students expressed a new awareness for

different perspectives and perceptions, and how these differences should be appreciated, especially as members of a team. Comments highlighted many of the concepts identified in the IPEC competencies such as trust, mutual respect, and the value of teamwork:

"I was surprised at how much detail we were able to pick up on as a group. Had I been looking at the picture alone (...) I wouldn't have noticed half the things that were described and identified as a group."

"You may never really see the whole picture until you have tried looking through someone else's eyes."

"I will take away the experience of trusting another individual"

"Viewing artwork together and describing what we saw, how it makes us feel, etc., proved to be a fun and rewarding exercise."

DISCUSSION

The program conveniently coincided with the traveling Smithsonian exhibit "The Outwin: American Portraiture Today". As a genre, portraiture often depicts revealing and messy truths. Through personal response, the exhibit unexpectedly drew out deep appreciation of the social drivers in healthcare. Prompts such as 'find a patient that you cannot relate with' or 'identify a piece of art that you might show to a friend with depression' were especially poignant examples that led to in-depth discussion about health literacy, access to care, and empathy in the debrief. The prompts, along with the qualitative comments, support the use of art-based pedagogies for new health professional students to engage them in early-role identity, as well as teamwork and collaboration skills, without the need for prior clinical experiences. Recognition of these skills has implications for interprofessional practice by the awareness of the importance of how each member of the team has something unique to contribute, and it is through sharing these contributions that we can maximize the impact of patient care and advance collaborative practice.

CONCLUSION

It is important that the competencies for interprofessional education and practice are introduced early in health professions curricula; yet this can be challenging with varying level of understanding of teamwork, and variations in clinical experiences. This experience offered an innovative opportunity to expose students to the value of teamwork, while also giving them an opportunity to recognize and value the different perspectives and perceptions of multiple disciplines. This opportunity provided an



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overview of interprofessional education in a neutral environment, while also exposing them to the importance of interprofessional practice for their individual professions.

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