Interprofessional Teamwork: An International Learning Experience in Nicaragua

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Abstract

Interprofessional teamwork is essential for safe, quality health care. Evidence reflects the failure of health care providers to collaborate and communicate has a negative impact on the delivery of safe quality care (IOM, 2003; Leonard, Graham, & Bonacum, 2004). As reported by Allen, Penn, and Nora (2006), research reveals the quality of patient care is enhanced, resource utilization improved, patient satisfaction increased, and morbidity and mortality reduced when health care providers function as an interdisciplinary team.

The Macy Foundation (2010) stated “teaching health professions students in teams will improve students' ability to practice as part of a team, improve the overall performance of health care teams, and improve the health of patients” (p. 4). Additionally, the concept of global health has become an important component of health care curricula, and faculty are charged with preparing future health care providers with the skills to function as an interdisciplinary team.

Interprofessional Learning Scale Questionnaire (RIPLS) was further evaluation attitudes and perceptions of students. The Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale Questionnaire (RIPLS) was developed to identify attitudes and perceptions of students enrolled at TTUHSC who participated in an international program to Jinotega, Nicaragua related to interprofessional education. The Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale Questionnaire (RIPLS) was administered pre- and post-trip. Additionally, students were required to attend six pre-trip planning sessions, and one session included a presentation of TeamSTEPPS concepts led by a representative of the QEP faculty team.

Constructivist learning theories play an important role in interprofessional education (Hean et al., 2012, p. 89). Four fundamental components of constructivism include (a) identification of the teacher as a facilitator of education, (b) development of learning experiences that help students recognize gaps between prior knowledge and new experiences, (c) active engagement of students using group interaction, and (d) provision of adequate time for in-depth examination of new experiences (Kaufman, 2003, p. 214). By facilitating assimilation of new knowledge into the individual learner’s personal and professional context students begin to develop lifelong learning skills and teachers facilitate interprofessional learning opportunities (Hean et al., 2012, p. 89).

RIPLS Questionnaire Findings

- Likert Scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 – strongly disagree)
- 19 questions measuring readiness for interprofessional learning
- 2 students indicated they had previous interprofessional teaching experiences:
  - Work-related educational activity
  - Interprofessional seminar and simulation as part of an OB nursing clinical experience
- None of the students had completed the RIPLS prior to participation in the international program to Jinotega

Pre-Trip Survey (n-6)
- Students valued learning with other students and believed it would help them become a more effective member of a health care team.
- Students believed shared learning would help them problem-solve, improve communication, .

Post-Trip Survey (n-10)
- Student scores increased in 14 of the 19 categories.

Methodology and Instrument

A quality improvement project was developed to identify attitudes and perceptions of students enrolled at TTUHSC who participated in an international program to Jinotega, Nicaragua related to interprofessional education. The Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale Questionnaire (RIPLS) was administered pre- and post-trip. Additionally, students were required to attend six pre-trip planning sessions, and one session included a presentation of TeamSTEPPS concepts led by a representative of the QEP faculty team.

Future Recommendations

The value of interprofessional education in global health opportunities is evident. Recommendations include continued inter- and intra-professional clinical experiences in Jinotega and development of research studies with a larger sample size to further evaluation attitudes and perceptions of students.

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