Implement Interprofessional Education in Healthcare

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IMPLEMENT INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN HEALTHCARE

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Today’s healthcare organizations face a barrage of pressures from both inside and outside. Consider the challenges outlined in a 2018 Becker’s Hospital Review article: healthcare rising costs, regulatory challenges, medicinal and technological advancement issues, training and education challenges, and ethical challenges, among them. Internally, the frequent divisions among administrators, doctors and nurses, and other care providers often lead to further pressures, such as those related to respect, communication, and priorities.

Healthcare patients have increasingly complex health needs and typically require more than one healthcare discipline to address the full spectrum of their care. But in a hospital setting, communication about patient care often exists in silos, with some parties receiving only partial or incorrect information.

All these challenges affect healthcare staff and patients and their families. Bringing healthcare staff together to learn with, and from,
each other helps break down silos and generates greater understanding of others’ perspectives and what other co-workers bring to the table. This, in turn, will help prevent burnout and improve caregiver well-being, the fourth prong in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s Quadruple Aim, formerly the Triple Aim.

The lack of understanding among healthcare workers begins in their professional education—most often, they are educated with peers, separated from other healthcare workers. Interprofessional education, however, changes that. IPE is a collaborative learning and training method that brings together two or more professions, and it provides a safe, practical framework where all employees share a common purpose: a focus on the patients’ and families’ needs.

In this issue of TD at Work, you will learn:
• what IPE is and why it’s critical in the healthcare profession
• how to implement IPE within your facility
• the benefits and challenges of implementing IPE
• how to sustain an IPE program.

What Is Interprofessional Education?

In 2010, the World Health Organization defined IPE as occurring “when students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes.”

IPE began in 1969 as a patient-centric education methodology to foster understanding between professions and disciplines. This pedagogical method bridges the power dynamics between healthcare workers by establishing empathy and conscious awareness—for example, understanding the power dynamics that often occur between a doctor and nurse and, in a different manner, between administrators and physicians.

Within the IPE framework, learners develop connections and bonds across professions and roles through a variety of modes of instructional delivery. In large part due to these connections, IPE results in enhanced quality of patient care, lower costs, decreased length of stay for patients, and reduced medical errors, according to an Institute of Medicine Committee on the Health Professions Education Summit report.

Importance of IPE to Healthcare

As talent development professionals, we understand well how work relations affect employees’ engagement and happiness at work. In “5 Steps for Building Trust in the Workplace,” Betsy Allen Manning writes, “Trust is the foundation for building strong teams, creating a positive work culture, and producing results.” Employers build trust through such things as transparency, respect, unity among team members, and care being shown.

Quality relationships in the workplace lead to improved employee morale, greater collaboration, higher employee retention rates, and increased productivity. When relationships are poor and there is a lack of trust in the working environment, it affects employees, such as through burnout.

Healthcare team members are burdened daily when asked to deliver higher-quality care at a lower cost. Such a burden weighs heavily, risking burnout and attrition of the best and brightest. How do talent development professionals counteract this risk?

It’s important, first, to manage expectations. In “How Healthcare Leaders Can Maintain Engagement in Times of Change,” Ryann K. Ellis writes, “There is little doubt that unclear expectations cause anxiety and confusion.” Gallup analysts Kolawole Mudele and Becky McCarville add, “As hospital leaders grapple to implement large-scale changes while cutting costs, clarifying employees’ expectations while also connecting change with the organization’s mission is even more vital.” That entails understanding what exactly lower cost means. Does it mean fewer resources and budget cuts? Does it mean in the spirit of efficiency, quicker appointments, thereby yielding less time with patients and clients? In the end, it most definitely means
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A call to action in controlling what we can: the quality of daily interaction our team members experience with each other, with patients and clients, with the organization, and with the community.

Another facet of a healthy work environment is one in which clinicians have a safe space to work, grow, and learn. At each juncture of the patient care continuum—that is, the span of all services a patient receives in any given period of time—lives an important, interprofessional interaction between care delivery team members. That interaction should be bias-free, with every team member functioning at the highest level within the healthcare delivery system. Yet all too often, friction and tension exist at those junctures, created by silos that organizational structure and differences in disciplines and professions shaped—and education then unintendedly perpetuated.

Developing Trust and Razing Silos

Transforming organizations from silos delivering fragmented care to teams delivering purposefully coordinated healthcare requires a ground-up approach with those closest to the patient leading the culture and work change. This requires mutual respect, empathy, and appreciation built with a working knowledge of these other members of a patient’s healthcare team. How do we systematically address perceived power differentials between disciplines? How do we help the organization rise to its mission and vision to optimize health system performance?

Research demonstrates that IPE helps to prepare clinicians to become collaborative interprofessional team members by demonstrating respect and positive attitudes toward one another. The common goals of improved patient care through better safety, outcomes, and experience bind them together.

An important IPE takeaway is the positive impact on clinicians' professional identity when they appreciate the strengths of fellow professionals and disciplines within the healthcare team. They gain an insight into the role each plays in a healthcare team. The learning methodology supports both learning from one another as well as learning about one another. IPE can dispel possible negative stereotypes—such as the power dynamics. For example, doctors may look down on nurses, not valuing that they

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Cultural Transformation With IPE

A cultural transformation occurs within an organization when the company undertakes interprofessional education and as employees learn and embrace the four Interprofessional Education Collaborative’s core competencies: values and ethics for interprofessional practice, roles and responsibilities, interprofessional communication, and teams and teamwork.

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<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdependent professional</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Collaborative practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear and doubt</td>
<td>Mutual trust</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Respect</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Burnout</td>
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