

Comprehension through cooperation: Medical students and students of physiotherapy learn in teams

Institutions involved in IPE project

- Medical Faculty Mannheim, Heidelberg University
- School of Physiotherapy at the University Medical Centre Mannheim

Context

A stronger cooperation between doctors and other health care professionals is needed to meet the challenges of providing better and more efficient health care in Germany's complex health care system. Therefore health organisations demand that all health care students are to be specifically prepared for interprofessional collaboration during their professional education.

IPE project

Since January 2014, a team was formed to develop interprofessional learning sessions for medical students and students of physiotherapy in order to interlink the medical studies and the vocational training of physiotherapy. Both, medical students (**6 years of university studies**) and students of physiotherapy (**3 years of non-academic vocational training**) are trained on the same campus of the University Medical Centre Mannheim, however, up till October 2014 they had been educated exclusively monoprofessionally.

The newly developed interprofessional sessions give the students the opportunity to get to know the other professions. Understanding the role, the fields of work and competencies of other health care professions will hopefully reduce negative stereotyping and will instead foster mutual respect. These occasions of interprofessional communication serve to provide the basis for effective collaboration in health care.

The aim of our project is to develop at least one interprofessional session in each academic year. The sessions are to form a coherent IPL curriculum sequence in order to deepen the interprofessional dialogue between the two professional groups over time. So far six of these sessions have been conducted and evaluated. One more is planned. By mid-2018, the complete IPL curriculum sequence is expected to be a regular part of the syllabus of both qualifications.

Conceptual framework

The definition of IPE according to CAIPE¹ has been adopted:

- **Learning with each other**
The participants' learning together allows to find out the common ground of 2 or more professions which reduces the distance between these professions.
- **Learning from each other**
The participants recognise the competencies and the limits of their own profession and the other professions. This awareness stimulates reciprocal respect and appreciation and facilitates the interprofessional exchange.
- **Learning about each other**
The participants come to understand the role which the other professions play in providing good health care in an interprofessional team

The interprofessional sessions combine the elements of (inter-)action and reflection. The (inter-)active part serves as the professional link between the student groups whereas the reflective part goes beyond that by discussing interprofessional issues.

¹ Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (2002). *Interprofessional Education: A Definition*. London: CAIPE.

Educational methods used in the sessions include case studies, shadowing, peer-tutoring, lecture, group discussion and reflection in small interprofessional groups.

Each session is **evaluated** at least twice by the participants using a self-developed paper & pencil questionnaire to gather quantitative and qualitative data on student satisfaction.

Interprofessional units

- **1st year medical students / 2nd year students of physiotherapy**
Seminar of anatomy using plastinated models, skeletons and hands-on exercises
- **1st year medical students / 2nd and 3rd year students of physiotherapy**
Shadowing half-day session: Medical students accompany and observe a student of physiotherapy while treating his/her patients. The shadowing session is followed by a seminar for medical students to reflect on their shadowing experience and to discuss interprofessional issues against this background
- **2nd year medical students / 1st year students of physiotherapy**
Lecture on interprofessional health care from different angles (health economics, doctor, physiotherapist) using a case study to demonstrate the needs of the patient
- **3rd year medical students / 1st - 3rd year students of physiotherapy**
Hands-on session to practice certain manual techniques of examining the upper/lower extremities
- **4th year medical students / 2nd - 3rd year students of physiotherapy**
Lecture on pulmonary complications and respiratory therapy followed by a hands-on session to learn about diagnostic and therapeutic equipment with regard to respiratory therapy
- **5th year medical students / 2nd - 3rd year students of physiotherapy**
To be developed
- **6th (= final) year medical students / 2nd year students of physiotherapy / 2nd year students of nursing**
Seminar on interprofessional discharge management using different cases to work on in interprofessional small groups

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