
Title: Harnessing the Power of Interprofessional Practice and Education to Meet the Multi-Faceted Needs of Individuals with Intellectual Disability



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Proposal

Interprofessional education (IPE) is the first step in preparing future health care and education professionals for interprofessional practice (IPP). According to the World Health Organization (2010) "interprofessional education occurs when students from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes." As more and more practice settings focus on multidisciplinary assessment and treatment as the standard of care, preprofessional training must set the foundation for this practice. This model of education and practice is especially relevant to diagnosis and treatment of individuals with intellectual disabilities who have multi-faceted needs and diverse characteristics. This thematic issue of the Journal of Intellectual Disability Diagnosis and Treatment will feature contributions from professionals who implement interprofessional education and practice in their work with individuals with intellectual disability.

Each individual with an intellectual disability is different-unique from his or her peers whose disability may stem from the same diagnosis. Thus, while two children may share the diagnosis of Down syndrome, for example, each individual profile will be shaped by the child's community of origin, cultural experiences, family experience, and cognitive, adaptive, and linguistic skills. Given this heterogeneity, embracing a philosophy of interprofessional training and practice is essential. Interprofessional practice will take different shapes and forms indicative to the environment. It will look different in a health care setting in comparison to an educational setting. The end result ideally will be enhanced team-based care and improved health and well-being-specifically for the individual with an intellectual disability and for the population in general.

In the health care setting, interprofessional practice may include professionals from nursing, speech-language pathology, dentistry, and osteopathy. For an individual with autism spectrum disorder, IPP means that the dentist recognizes the patient's deficits in pragmatic language and collaborates with the speech-language pathologist to optimize ways the patient can appropriately express his fear regarding the events of the dental exam. In the educational setting, interprofessional practice may include professionals from general education, special education, school-psychology, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology. For the child with autism spectrum disorder, IPP in the school setting means that the occupational therapist works together with the general education teacher to identify ways to adjust the classroom configuration to optimize the child's participation and learning experience. Instead of members from each discipline viewing the patient/student/client with his or her own lens in a fragmented way, interprofessional practice calls on professionals to collaborate and interact across disciplines with the common goal of optimizing the health, education, vocational, and social outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Professional preparation programs are called on to lay the foundation for such collaborative practice, incorporating the core competencies of interprofessional education identified by the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (2011): 1) ethics and values; 2) communication; 3) teamwork; and 4) roles and responsibilities. For example, a preprofessional program founded in IPE would include students from various disciplines all learning together about

identification, diagnosis and intervention for individuals with intellectual disability. Students would use team-based learning and case-based problem solving to understand the nature of a given intellectual disability. IPE has both advantages and challenges. Advantages include the development of leadership skills and the promotion of team work, collaboration, and best practices; challenges include a willingness to learn outside your practice area and the necessity of having a high level of confidence in your own clinical skills.

REFERENCE

Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel. (2011). Core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice: Report of an expert panel. Washington, D.C.: Interprofessional Education Collaborative.

Keywords: Interprofessional practice; Interprofessional education; collaboration; community health, autism spectrum disorders.
