

Why is Interprofessional Education Important?

Caring for people with complex health and social care problems requires the inputs of different professions. Good interprofessional practice will result in the following:

1. Optimal Care

When different professions with patients or service users, share their insights and experiences together, care is more relevant and timely. This is because through shared knowledge the right solution for care interventions can be agreed by the whole team. In these situations team goals, agreed with patients and users, are set and progress towards them can be monitored. Another important factor is that professionals who work together achieve greater satisfaction from their work. That is because health and social care professionals do work together often side by side and where they understand each other's work and exchange their decisions easily then day-to-day working becomes easier. Working alongside one another and not understanding each other can be challenging and difficult. This may lead to repetition and duplication of effort, a lack of understanding concerning the right solutions to identified problems, misunderstandings and unsafe practice.

2. Safe Practice

In interprofessional practice there are two elements to being safe, i) practicing proficiently within your own professional competence, and 2) working effectively with others. It is the latter component which we are dealing with in IPE. In many instances this requires the exchange of timely information either between members of one team or between teams.

Examples where information is exchanged between different professionals:

- a) During discharge from hospital to another care setting
- b) Where practitioners are required to share information concerning vulnerable adults and children
- c) In emergency situations where information is exchanged verbally and again clear, precise and relevant information must be given.

Safe practice may require you to question a colleague concerning why they are doing this process in this way, rather than another. You may have completed some work and subsequently doubt that this course of approach to the problem was the right one, and need advice from a colleague. An inability to work together through these types of concerns has caused harm to the public and led to serious and fatal outcomes. In your IPE events you will gain a greater understanding about why it will be important to feel able to seek help and support from other practitioners. You will learn about positive excellent team working and learn from incidents where team working was identified as inadequate.

3. Enjoyment in your career

Where IPE values are adopted by the whole team then working cultures and environments feel right. In this way cultures are developed which embrace and value all team members, including learners. Development of leaders with skills to enable the development of others will follow. Structured information systems and processes, effective communication strategies, regular dialogue among the team and community members all play an important role in establishing a good working culture. All of these factors will lead to more effective team working and collaborative practice.

These outlines identify why in the twenty first century all professions who work in public service are expected to acquire skills in team working and collaborative practice.

Further Reading

Carnwell R and Buchanan J (2005). *Effective Practice in Health and Social Care. A partnership Approach*. McGraw-Hill Education, Open University Press.

Pronovoist P and Vohr E (2010). *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals*. Hudson Street Press, Penguin Group USA.

World Health Organisation (2010). *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education & Collaborative Practice*. Geneva, World Health Organisation.