

Learning from a Nurse for A Day: A Program Evaluation of an Interdisciplinary Learning Experience for Medical Students

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Abstract

Interdisciplinary team training is the collaborative approach to education in the healthcare field that brings together students of different healthcare professions for synergistic activities in order to improve interdisciplinary teamwork and communication.¹ Interdisciplinary training has long been identified by both the Institute of Medicine and the World Health Organization as a goal for training all healthcare professionals due to its ability to help impact knowledge of roles in the healthcare team, decrease personal bias by improving understanding of scope of practice and expertise of each role, and promote communication between the healthcare professions.^{1,2} It has also been shown that interdisciplinary training during healthcare education helps to improve quality of patient care and patient outcomes as well as healthcare provider's satisfaction with their jobs.³

Prior research has shown that interactions between third year medical students and nurses is generally rated by both parties as poor.⁴ This in turn affects communication and interdisciplinary teamwork, which may extend beyond post graduate education and into physician practice.⁴ It is evident that a gap in knowledge exists for physicians in training in their understanding of the education, expertise, and competencies of nurses and how they can best work as an interdisciplinary team. This nurse shadowing initiative attempts to address this gap by inverting the traditional medical hierarchy to put the nurses in a role as teachers and experts in their field as medical students shadow them for a day.

Purpose

The primary goal of this study was to assess baseline and post-intervention perceptions, understandings, and ideas that medical students and nurses have of interdisciplinary communication and teamwork. Additionally, to assess effectiveness of the intervention in changing perceptions, ideas, and understandings that nurses and medical students have of each other on the labor and delivery unit. The results of the study will be used to evaluate the program and make improvements for future groups of medical students and nurses.

Methods

Recruitment: Medical student participants (n=111 pre-survey and n=88 post-survey) were recruited during their orientation day for their OBGYN Clerkship at Emory University School of Medicine. Nurse participants (n=17 pre-survey and n=8 post-survey) were volunteers who were contacted by the charge nurse or unit director and volunteered

Medical Student Study Sample	
Gender	Woman 61.26% Man 38.74% Transgender 0.0% Non-binary 0.0% Prefer not to respond 0.0%
L&D Site	Grady 33.3% EUHM 66.6%

Nurse Study Sample	
Gender	Woman 100.0% Man 0.0% Transgender 0.0% Non-binary 0.0% Prefer not to respond 0.0%
L&D Site	Grady 62.5% EUHM 37.5%

Interdisciplinary Experience: Regardless of participation in the study, all third-year medical students participated in the interdisciplinary clinical experience. The experience consisted of working with an experienced labor and delivery nurse for an entire 12-hour shift.

Measures: Students and nurses completed before and after Likert scale survey questionnaires, developed by investigators, about their knowledge and attitudes regarding the role and scope of practice of nurses and interdisciplinary teamwork and communication. Additionally, students were able to give free text responses at the end of the survey regarding strengths of the experience and areas of improvement.

Results

Survey Data

Experience Was Valuable Part of Medical...

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral

Valuable Experience to Learn About and Participate in...

-
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

Semi-Structured Responses

Medical Student: "This was an excellent experience that I think many other clerkships could benefit from implementing. It allowed me to see more of how the hospital worked and the scope of what nurses do for patients. I also loved following one patient through her entire labor course and I felt far more bonded to the patient than I did in the MD role. I also valued seeing nurses' decision-making skills and the interventions they do for patients."

Nurse: "This experience will help our nurses learn to think about the MD perspectives as well as students will learn to have respect for nurses"

Conclusions/Limitations

1. Majority of medical students (67.25%) agreed or strongly agreed that this interdisciplinary experience learning from a nurse for a day was a valuable part of their medical education
2. Majority of nurses (87.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that this interdisciplinary experience having a medical student learn from them for a day was a valuable way to learn about and participate in interdisciplinary education.
3. Feedback themes for improvement: experiences was too long, experience needed more structure or specific learning objectives for medical students, better communication with nurses about expectations and role in teaching medical students

Limitations:

1. Potential selection bias in medical student and nurse participants
2. Use of non-validated survey questionnaires
3. No objective measure to assess improvement of interdisciplinary teamwork or communication (surveys are subjective/self report)
4. Small sample of nurses who responded to surveys, may not be representative of all nurses who participated in the program

Future Directions:

1. Take into account medical feedback about the length and structure of the experience
2. Develop specific objectives and structure for the experience
3. Provide more guidance and communication with nurses and nurse management about the nurses role

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