

BACKGROUND

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), interprofessional education (IPE) “occurs when two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes”.¹ Research states that IPE is necessary to properly prepare students for work in a healthcare environment where patient outcomes will be influenced by collaboration of team members.² It also suggests that IPE training as students assists in development of professional identity, facilitating understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, roles and responsibilities of other disciplines, and limitations of the professions.³ IPE is critical in providing quality, comprehensive patient care which encourages Physical Therapy (PT) and Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) students to value PT/PTA partnerships. However, current healthcare research reveals a dichotomy between perceived need for education and benefits of implementation.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine the quantitative impact of participation in an IPE activity for PT and PTA students in their final year of study.

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis was that following participation in the collaborative activity, PT and PTA students would perceive interprofessional practice as an important component of patient care that could easily be implemented into their practice.

METHODS

40 PT students from The University of Scranton and 14 PTA students from Lackawanna College enrolled in their final year of study participated in a 3 hour case-based activity. Students were randomized into groups and assigned to acute care, inpatient rehab, home health, and outpatient settings. PT students in each setting collectively obtained a history, performed an examination, and generated a plan of care (POC) for the same standardized patient. PTA students implemented a treatment session based on the POC. Both cohorts exchanged dialogue and ideas during the activity. Post activity, all 54 students discussed the case across the continuum of care. Students also interacted with a panel of local clinicians (PT, PTA, occupational therapist, and speech language pathologist) to gain further understanding of interdisciplinary collaboration. Students completed a 20-item, 5-point Likert Scale, anonymous survey on Survey Monkey prior to participating in the activity, following the activity, and 6 months later during their final internships prior to graduation. Survey results were analyzed and compared among and across cohorts.

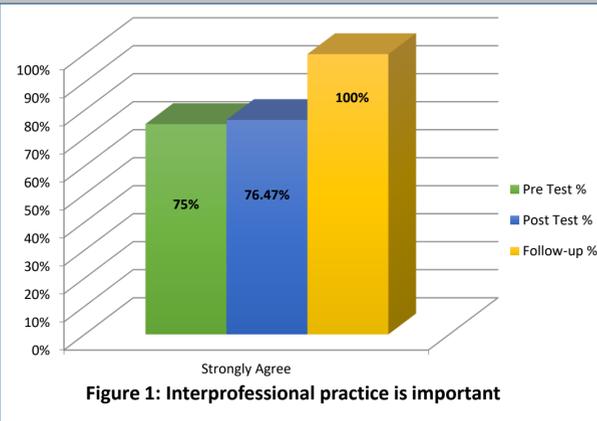


Figure 1: Interprofessional practice is important

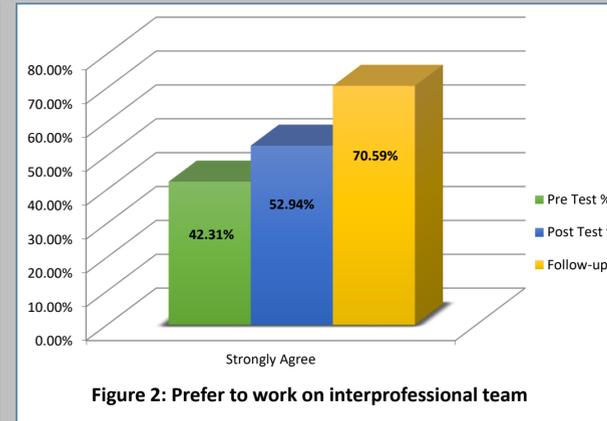


Figure 2: Prefer to work on interprofessional team

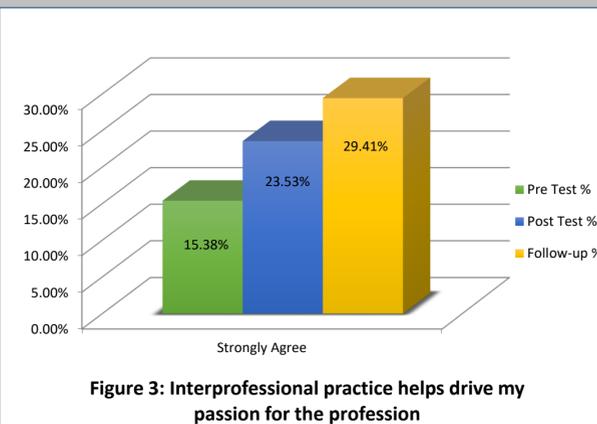


Figure 3: Interprofessional practice helps drive my passion for the profession

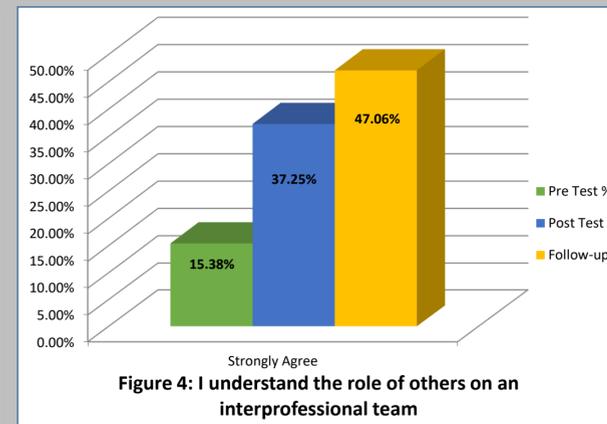


Figure 4: I understand the role of others on an interprofessional team

RESULTS

- 52 students completed the pre-survey, 51 the post-survey, and 17 the follow-up survey.
- Survey questions were grouped into categories (Understanding Value, Confidence, Leadership, and Communication) and response of Strongly Agree increased positively across categories in each post-survey.
 - Understanding Value: Strongly Agree responses were 47.10% pre-survey, 55.12% post-survey, and 68.24% follow-up survey
 - Confidence: Strongly Agree responses were 23.56% pre-survey, 27.45% post-survey, and 36.76% follow-up survey
 - Leadership: Strongly Agree responses were 35.00% pre-survey, 45.88% post-survey, and 58.82% follow-up survey
 - Communication: Strongly Agree responses were 36.98% pre-survey, 48.37% post-survey, and 53.92% follow-up survey
- Both PT and PTA students strongly agreed to a preference for working as part of an interprofessional team, however, PTA student’s preference for interprofessional interactions was greater than PT (PT: 27.03% pre-survey, 38.89% post-survey, and 50% follow-up survey; PTA: 80.00% pre-survey, 86.67% post-survey, 88.89% follow-up survey).
- PT and PTA students strongly agreed that interprofessional practice was difficult at the time of the post-survey, however, those values decreased at the time of the follow-up survey (PT: 11.11% post-survey, 0.00% follow-up survey; PTA: 26.67% post-survey, 11.11% follow-up survey).
- Figures 1-4 above illustrate the Strongly Agree results for individual survey questions related to interprofessional practice.
 - Interprofessional practice is important (75% to 100%); Prefer to work on an interprofessional team (42.31% to 70.59%); Interprofessional practice helps drive my passion for the profession (15.38% to 29.41%); I understand the role of others on an interprofessional team (15.38% to 47.06%)

DISCUSSION

CAPTE standards reflect requirements for academic programs to integrate interprofessional learning activities into the didactic and clinical curriculum effective January 2018.⁴ Previous research has indicated that implementation of IPE into the curriculum may be challenging due to varied standards and requirements for individual disciplines, which often have little interaction with each other.⁵ Findings from this study suggest that with planning and collaboration, students from two campuses can be easily brought together to work on a unified project to meet the new standards pertaining to IPE. In addition, this study suggests that attitudes and perceptions may be altered during a relatively short collaborative activity.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE

Interprofessional collaboration between PTs and PTAs is essential for providing quality patient care. Facilitating understanding of each role and fostering a culture of value, confidence, leadership, and communication through IPE activities woven through the curriculum are effective and beneficial ways to encourage collaboration between entry-level PT and PTA graduates.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this study include small sample size and varied student baseline experience prior to activity.

CONCLUSIONS

These findings support the hypothesis that participation in IPE activities has a positive impact on perceptions of roles/collaboration of graduating PT and PTA students.

REFERENCES

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