Addressing opioid misuse and abuse through interprofessional engagement and education: One university's experience

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Background & Purpose

To prepare for the evolving interprofessional approach (IA) in health care practice, health profession students are expected to learn "about", "from" and "with" each other through interprofessional education (IPE) initiatives. The management of chronic pain is exemplary of the need for an IA which includes the safe use of opioids.

Methods

An interdisciplinary committee organized an interprofessional (IP) discussion around the opioid epidemic to afford students to learn about and from faculty in their respective professions and the healthcare team. Faculty from counseling, nursing, occupational therapy (OT), pharmacy, physical therapy (PT) and representatives from the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention (CCPDAP) and the JP Prescription Drug Awareness Foundation (JPPDAF) formed the panel (Table, Image 1). Discussions included opioid epidemiological data and a personal reflection about a child's death related to mixed drug overdose. Education and resources addressed safe use, storage, and disposal of opioids. Practitioners described real-world vignettes on how opioid misuse and abuse affected practice and patient care (Table, Image 2). The panel concluded with discussion and a program evaluation. Advertising for the event included email, posters, and campus intranet (Image 2).

Results

Of the 70 participants, forty-four (63%) completed the program evaluation. The majority (80%) of students indicated the panel was an excellent IP educational event that was helpful, informative and enjoyable. Students reported gaining a greater appreciation for the magnitude of the problem (43.2%) and an increased appreciation of IP approaches to opioid management strategies (perspectives, impact, role in management/treatment; 36.4%). Additional details provided below regarding Participation by Profession (Figure 1), Satisfaction of Format (Figure 2, blue) and Satisfaction of Topics (Figure 2, yellow).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

![Figure 2](image2.png)

Conclusions

Uniting healthcare professionals is needed to combat prescription overdose deaths. Education models such as this IP panel discussion, demonstrate a positive model and perceived value for linking IP and collaborative practice. The evaluation results indicated that the students were satisfied with the event and had a greater understanding of the magnitude of the epidemic. Importantly, participants identified the need to 'own' their individual responsibility as future health care professionals, while also working collaboratively as part of an IP team to combat the opioid epidemic and ensuring adequate and appropriate pain management for our patients.

Future Directions

- Include interprofessional reflection learning "with" one another.
- Greater emphasis on interprofessional dialogue and practitioner vignettes.
- Add prescribing professional perspective

References


Each author declares no relevant conflict of interest or financial relationships. Funds from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) supported this effort.