An Innovative Collaboration Between Dental Hygiene and Bachelor of Science in Nursing: “Oral Health and Blood Pressure Initiatives”

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Background

- Senior Management requested creative and collaborative proposals to develop and implement interprofessional education (IPE) Curriculum Pilot Projects which would specifically support the interprofessional education initiative within the division.
- Lorraine Betts, from the faculty of Nursing and Linda McKay from the faculty of Dental Hygiene responded with the following proposal:
  - To develop and test a mechanism for allowing students in oral health science programs and nursing programs to effectively meet the requests for service from the community.

The Blood Pressure Initiative

Fifteen volunteer second year BScN students and three Nursing faculty mentors came from the College’s St. James Campus to the Casa Loma campus for one-half day sessions to teach eighty first year Dental Hygiene Students, in their pre-clinical setting, about the taking of a Manual Blood Pressure. Each Nursing Student worked with a small group of eight Dental Hygiene Students, demonstrating the taking of a Manual Blood Pressure for the group on one of the Dental Hygiene students. The Nursing student then spent time with each dental hygiene student in the group, while they practiced taking a manual blood pressure until the dental hygiene student felt comfortable at the skill.

While the Nursing student was working with one pair of students the remaining dental hygiene students were taking a full health history of their partner. Both the Nursing and Dental Hygiene clinical faculty were there as mentors only.

Surveys similar to the oral health component of the project, were distributed to both sets of students for the blood pressure project. These surveys have also been utilized by the Health Information Management program students as a course assignment regarding data entry and data analysis.

Lessons Learned

- Students learned how much they knew when given the opportunity to teach other students about the skill that they have learned within their own profession.
- Students learned there are crossover skill sets between the dental hygiene and nursing professions.
- Faculty learned the challenges related to coordinating the project – time tabling, lab availability, valuable supplies, and amount of time to coordinate the project, as well as the impact for those volunteer students in taking time away from their uni-professional program.
- Students and faculty learned:
  - the need to understand each others professional ‘jargon’ for improved communication between professionals
  - the need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when providing oral care to patients (nursing) about personal ergonomics when providing care at bedside (dental hygiene)

Conclusions

- Recognition that interprofessional learning needs to continue
- A project like this is an effective vehicle for enabling nursing and dental hygiene students to learn with, from and about each other.
- This project demonstrates that the faculties of two programs, who have never worked together in the past, are capable of collaborating on a unique and valuable IPE initiative, when given the opportunity to think creatively.

Where do we go from here? The authors of this IPE pilot project believe:

- It needs to become a sustainable aspect of both our programs curriculum.
- There is a need for the nursing and dental hygiene programs at George Brown College to expand this project to include all registered practical and personnel support worker nursing students.
- There are opportunities to expand this project into placement settings, for our students, within Long Term Care (LTC) and Rehabilitation Centers.
- The addition of our Health Information Management program students to utilize their skills in entering and analyzing the data from the feedback questionnaires of the nursing and dental hygiene students would add another dimension of interprofessional learning to the project.

Resources of both manpower and funding from the College are necessary to continue this project.

The Oral Health Initiative

Eight volunteer second year Dental Hygiene students and two Dental Hygiene faculty mentors came from the College’s Casa Loma Campus to the St. James Campus each day for four days over the course of one week, to teach two hundred first year BScN students in their pre-clinical lab setting, at bedside, how to perform a daily oral assessment and provide daily oral care procedures for mentally healthy patients.

Each day consisted of two, two-hour sessions, and each lesson included approximately twenty-five nursing students.

Two Dental Hygiene students presented, at bedside, a short fifteen minute information and demonstration session about oral assessment and daily oral care procedures. They then switched roles. The Dental Hygiene students provided guidance and support to the nursing students while they practiced both of these skills.

At the end of each clinical session surveys were distributed to both groups of students to assess the following:

1. if the students doing the teaching felt they had the level of knowledge and skill to adequately train the students who were learning the skill
2. if the students doing the teaching perceived that the students who were learning the skill had a working knowledge of how to apply the skill they had just learned
3. if students enjoyed learning from and working with another profession.

As a course assignment about data entry and data analysis, students from George Brown’s Health Information Management Program also contributed a part of the Centre for Health Sciences, analyzed the data from two years of surveys. This analysis has provided us with some preliminary feedback from the students about the project.

If considering a project of this nature the authors offer the following recommendations:

- Choose a primary skill from your health care profession (HCP) that is also a skill required by the other HCP to be able to perform.
- Project developers need to be flexible in making project arrangements and willing to think ‘outside the box’ to make these kinds of projects happen.
- Run a pilot of the project with some students in the program to help in deciding if the project would be feasible to include all students within the two programs.
- Make sure to survey the student participants for their feedback.
- Debriefing sessions for the Faculty involved are essential at the end of each project.
- Schedule focus groups for the students after they have used these skills for a while within their respective program placements.

If considering a project of this nature and have any further questions please contact: lgrant@georgebrown.ca

Partners

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