EVALUATION OF INTERPROFESSIONAL HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIVITIES AT A RETIREMENT HOME

INTRODUCTION
The Health Promotion Hub at Casa Loma campus provides an interprofessional community field placement experience for students from a variety of health care and related professions. The Hub’s focus is on learning the practice of health promotion while engaging in, and learning about, interprofessional collaborative practice. George Brown College was invited by the Annex Retirement Residence (Revera Inc.) to provide an interprofessional team of students to develop and implement a series of targeted health promotion programs for Annex residents and staff during the 2008–09 academic year. We leveraged this opportunity to observe and evaluate the Annex health promotion initiatives as an effective interprofessional learning experience for students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
(1) to evaluate whether the interprofessional student teams met the health promotion needs as specifically identified by the Annex Retirement Residence
(2) to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative health promotion activities as a form of interprofessional education (IPE) for students from various health care and related professions

METHODOLOGY
An interprofessional team of students from nursing, medicine, activation and gerontology, fitness and lifestyle management, dental hygiene, social service worker and hearing instrument specialist programs developed and implemented, at the Annex Retirement Residence, four health promotion workshops on topics of particular importance to the Annex, and two research projects related to the social determinants of health. Each of these activities was evaluated. The research projects generated reports for the management team of the Annex Retirement Residence.

A separate research team gathered data about the students’ collaborative health promotion experience at the Annex. We used a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) approach. This included: (i) pre- and post-program questionnaires for students using two validated scales, the Interdisciplinary Education Perceptions Scale (IEPS – Luecht et al, 1990) and the Interprofessional Attitudes Questionnaire (IAQ – Carpenter, 1995); and (ii) mid- and post-program interviews/focus groups involving the students, faculty and Annex staff.

FINDINGS
The four student-led workshops for Annex residents and staff were well attended and positively received by the participants.

The two student-led research projects generated practical results and recommendations which were found useful for future planning by Annex management staff.

The quantitative findings of the IPE evaluation (pre- and post-questionnaires) were inconclusive. The mean differences in pre-post scores were statistically and practically insignificant.

The qualitative findings of the IPE evaluation confirmed that students both believed and were observed to have benefited significantly from this interprofessional learning experience. In particular, students:

- took advantage of this opportunity to learn about and collaborate with students of other professions in an applied practice setting.
- reported benefiting from the opportunity to augment their profession-specific learning with information about the theory of health promotion while engaging in the supervised practice of this discipline.
- appreciated the opportunity to provide customized and targeted programs and research that were meaningful and useful to this client.

Students also identified several structural factors in this learning experience that require further consideration, particularly around scheduling and time constraints, academic program commitment, and academic credit.

CONCLUSIONS
Benefits to Industry Partner: The students’ health promotion workshops and research at the Annex were judged to be helpful and were well received by Annex residents, staff and management. The Annex has invited George Brown College to continue this partnership.

Benefits to Students: The students, Annex staff and GBC faculty identified numerous advantages to students who engaged in interprofessional learning as collaborative health promoters.

Benefits to George Brown College: These findings confirm the importance and effectiveness of the Health Promotion Hub as an option in the array of interprofessional education experiences offered by George Brown College. They also point out a number of areas for further improvement in the organization of the Health Promotion placement.

DISCUSSION
A focus on the social determinants of health and health promotion is thought to be an appropriate vehicle for interprofessional education. These themes provide a common meeting place for students from a variety of health care and related professions. Developing meaningful and practical applied learning activities around health promotion is enhanced with a partner such as the Annex, which has identified its own health promotion needs. All key voices in this project (students, faculty, Annex staff and residents) reported a high level of satisfaction and evidence of new learning based on the programs developed collaboratively by this interprofessional student team.

FUTURE RESEARCH
We will continue to build our working relationship with the Annex Retirement Residence.

We will identify other similar partners with whom we can offer this type of program.

We will continue to improve, grow and support the Health Promotion Hub experience as an integral part of our overall interprofessional education strategy.

We will seek out more robust evaluation tools for interprofessional education.