



*“Qui docet discit: He who teaches, learns”*

# Investigating the Peer Teaching Role in Interprofessional Peer-Assisted Learning

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## WHAT WE LEARNED

Students enjoyed and benefited from their volunteer interprofessional peer teaching experiences. They reported opportunities to improve their own teaching and communication skills and to learn more about the students and profession that they were teaching. Students confirmed that interprofessional peer teaching provides a relevant and effective vehicle for interprofessional engagement and learning.

### BACKGROUND

- Peer teaching (peer assisted learning) is widely used and has been proven an effective learning method within health professional education.
- Student teachers report significant personal benefits from the peer teaching experience including solidifying knowledge, increased self-confidence and self-efficacy, improved skills in teaching and explaining, and leadership.
- Little is known about the experience of students in the peer teaching role when the learners are of a different health profession.

### OBJECTIVES

- Explore the benefits and challenges perceived by students acting as peer teachers for students of other healthcare professions.
- Determine if this form of student experience advances interprofessional engagement and learning.

### METHODS

- 36 senior students, from four healthcare professions (Dental Hygiene, Denturism, Fitness & Lifestyle Management, and Hearing Instrument Specialist) volunteered to teach individuals and groups of students of another profession in one of four peer-assisted learning scenarios
- 30 peer teachers completed open-ended survey questions following their peer teaching assignments.
- Ten peer teachers also participated in one of three semi-structured group interviews.
- Survey responses and interview transcripts were analysed for emergent themes.
- nVivo™ software was utilized to assist in generating, defining and cross-indexing emergent categories and sub-categories

### RESULTS

#### 1. Students reported numerous perceived benefits and rewards in the role of interprofessional peer teacher.

They identified opportunities for self-improvement and interprofessional learning, for example, to:

- work with and learn about other students and programs,
- teaching something about which the peer teacher feels knowledgeable and confident,
- share one’s knowledge and passion about one’s own profession,
- assess one’s own level of knowledge and teaching abilities,
- practice and increase confidence in teaching, explaining and communicating with others, relevant to teaching patients,
- take on a leadership role,
- take advantage of the opportunity to obtain marks offered for doing a volunteer role.

#### 2. Peer teachers experienced specific teaching challenges and insights because learners were from a different profession.

- Different experience than teaching students of their own profession.
- Could not assume:
  - what the other profession might already have learned or been exposed to,
  - which information would be considered relevant or important for the other profession,
  - about the best way to teach content to students of another profession
- Needed to monitor or adjust their use of profession-specific language or jargon as well as the depth of content.

#### 3. Through their experience, peer teachers learned more about their learners’ and their own profession.

- Found areas of commonality with another profession,
- Impacted the learning and practice of students of another profession,
- Gained new insights about both professions during the process of teaching,
- Identified areas in which their professions were both similar and different,
- Recognized how each profession was patient-centred,
- Identified potential opportunities to collaborate with the other profession in a clinical or office setting,
- Greater understanding of what members of the learners’ profession know and do,
- Recognized the extent to which students of other professions deal with a different or possibly broader or more complex range of clients/patients with different health care challenges.

### WHAT STUDENT PEER TEACHERS SAID

*“...I just felt pretty confident that I knew how to teach it and I knew the information to pass on my knowledge and teach other professions”.*

*“...when we’re working at the same level, it’s like you’re a student, I’m a student, don’t worry about it, I’m going to show you in a way that it’s not intimidating”.*

*“I was trying to see if I thought about it in a different way. I think that any opportunity where you’re teaching somebody else, you learn more about your own methods of doing things as well”.*

*“So I want to see how my abilities were to teach and how well I actually knew myself about blood pressure and how to teach it.”*

*“... it also reminds you that that’s how you have to talk to your own patient not just these nursing students that don’t know anything, because your patients don’t know anything either”.*

*“...students from other professions than ours know their stuff in different ways ...for people from my profession it is obvious and for them it is not...”.*

*“I felt that I had to simplify the answers, because they do not have the same background I was unable to use terms that they would not understand and the depth of the information I gave was less”.*

*“I was expecting that ...may not be having much interest learning about denturism but they were amazing and showed keen interest”.*

*“To find out the similarities and differences we have between professions. To effectively share with the students our scope of practice”.*

*“Relating our profession is challenging, but finding common ground is a great reward”.*

*“I hoped to improve my English level, by explaining to people things that I know and answering their questions”.*



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