Purpose: Research demonstrates that Interprofessional (IP) care teams can improve transitional care, reduce re-admissions and improve patient health status, contributing to reduction in health disparities.1 This is particularly important for patients with chronic illness from underserved and diverse groups. The objective of the SHARP program - Students Helping At-Risk Patients, is for students in nursing, medicine and social work to learn about working in IP teams as they support, educate and navigate patients through their healthcare transitions and complex care experiences. SHARP student teams co-ordinate and carry out tasks associated with patient transitional care, promoting patient learning about their health status and providing system navigation. including: 1) assessing patient physical and social environment and identifying community resources to support patients; 2) providing patient medication education; and; 3) following-up on referrals and patient appointments.

Methods: An IP team of educators was convened to develop and integrate SHARP within existing clinical courses. A prospective mixed methods pilot evaluation was designed to test the program with 24 students and 8 patients. Measures were selected to assess student learning of IP teamwork and transitional care skills, assess patient experiences and health outcomes, and potential health system benefits. Program logistical factors including projected SHARP program team co-ordination needs, patient selection partnerships and processes, patient retention, patient communication and support needs were included in the assessment.

Results: To be reported upon completion – Quantitative data will include student before (baseline) and after (at program completion) changes in knowledge of professional roles within the team, attitudes towards IP healthcare teamwork (using the Interprofessional Attitudes Scale)2 and perceived utilization of IP team-based care skills. Qualitative data will include student narrative reflections of SHARP learning experiences. Patient quantitative outcomes will be assessed for patients, including medication adherence (self-report), health literacy (REALM-SF in English3 and Spanish4), satisfaction with student interactions (visual analogue scale) and numbers of admission to hospital (data collected from medical record). Where possible, admission rates will be compared with matched controls of patients from the same clinics.

Conclusion: SHARP is an innovative integrated IP program designed by an IP team of educators to support students in development of skills necessary for future IP teamwork. The program has the potential to benefit the health system as students support and navigate patients through care transitions necessary to improve health of vulnerable patients in the community. Lessons learned from the pilot evaluation will inform scale up and broader program dissemination within other professional schools.
SHARP: Students Helping At Risk Patients to Promote Health and Reduce Disparities

Keywords:
Patient navigation, Reducing health disparities and Transitional care

References:


Abstract Summary:
We describe the development of an interprofessional (IP) program to improve transitional care and reduce health disparities. SHARP: Students Helping At-Risk Patients provides opportunities for students of nursing, medicine and social work to learn in IP care teams while supporting small groups of chronically ill patients at-risk for poor outcomes

Content Outline:
I Introduction:

A. Current pressures to simultaneously improve patient outcomes, increase patient satisfaction and contain costs, pose a challenge to health systems with limited resources in caring for diverse and underserved patients with complex, chronic health conditions.

B. Research demonstrates that Interprofessional (IP) care teams can improve transitional care, reduce re-admissions and improve patient health status.

II Development and Evaluation:

i) Forming the IP educational development team

ii) Creating core and discipline-specific course objectives

iii) SHARP logistics

iv) Evaluating students understanding of working in IP teams, value of IP teams and comfort in interacting with other professions

v) Evaluating patient outcomes including admission rates, medication adherence, health literacy, patient experience and satisfaction

vi) Mixed methods integration process and results
III Implications for Future Research and Practice:

Plans for SHARP scale up will be described and future evaluation highlighted.

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