Interprofessional Collaboration to Support Food Literacy and Mental Health Resilience in Adolescents

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Undergraduate nursing students at a private, urban university complete a public health nursing (PHN) clinical in their final semester of the program of study. Over the course of a recent three-year partnership, teams of PHN students joined with local school leaders and key community stakeholders to assess priority health promotion needs and to develop and implement interactive workshops in an after-school program.

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the processes involved in capacity building for primary prevention through improved physical and mental health wellness among students in the after-school program of a local middle school. Examples of strategies used to promote interprofessional collaboration are described to highlight the key elements of the service-learning partnership.

Strategies for collaboration included interprofessional education at each phase of the project, from assessment with Photovoice methods to implementation with skills-based health promotion workshops. Assessment findings led students to design workshops focused on basic food skills, cooking, and mental health resilience. PHN students implemented the PHN process using the Healthy People 2020 MAP-IT framework (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2018) to support evidence-based program planning, development, and evaluation/tracking. PHN students also implemented the Food Literacy Framework for Action (Cullen, Hatch, Martin, Higgins, & Sheppard, 2015).

Through an in-depth analysis of the PHN process, PHN students documented growth in food literacy competencies in the adolescent students participating in an after-school program. In addition, PHN students incorporated best practices for adolescent mental health promotion and explored avenues for nature-based strategies to support resilience.

Strategies for interprofessional collaboration enhanced the service-learning partnership between teams of PHN students, faculty, and school leaders. Through analysis of outcomes and lessons learned over the course of three years, student teams have increased the capacity for food literacy and mental health resilience among middle school students in an after-school program.

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Abstract Summary:
Over a three-year period, teams of public health nursing clinical students joined with local school leaders to assess health promotion needs and implement interactive workshops in an after-school program. This presentation focuses on development of the workshops, tracking of outcomes, and lessons learned from the partnership.

Content Outline:

1. Background and Purpose
   1. Service-learning model of partnership for public health nursing (PHN) clinical education
   2. Key community partner: Leaders/stakeholders of a local middle school after-school program
   3. Description of the PHN process involved in the partnership and health promotion program planning

2. Methods and Results
   1. Capacity building for primary prevention among adolescents in the after-school program
   2. Interprofessional collaboration strategies
      1. Photovoice assessment
      2. Evidence-based workshop design and implementation
      3. Frameworks for program planning
   3. Outcomes tracking and lessons learned
      1. Food literacy competencies
      2. Mental health resilience indicators
3. Conclusion
   1. Enhanced service-learning partnership
   2. Increased capacity for food literacy and mental health resilience among adolescents in the after-school program

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Author Summary: Dr. Gina Alexander is a public health nursing educator with professional expertise in maternal child health and research experience in holistic health promotion initiatives. She is the author or coauthor of 23 publications relating to interprofessional education and the efficacy of mind-body practices. Recent research has focused on the prevention of childhood obesity and the effects of yoga practice on physical and mental health outcomes. She has had numerous presentations at scientific and professional conferences.