Sigma Theta Tau International's 29th International Nursing Research Congress

What Can Graduate Master’s Entry Nursing Students and Veterinary Medicine Students Learn From Each Other?

Susan L. Adams, PhD, RN, NP-BC
School of Nursing, University of California-Davis, Sacramento, CA, USA

Purposes/Aims

The purpose of this project was to bring graduate Masters Entry Nursing (MEPN) students together with students from Veterinary Medicine (VetMed) in an interprofessional (IP) case-based learning experience and to evaluate the experience.

Rationale/Background

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recommend building competencies in IP collaborative education (IPE) and practice (IPP). An IPE approach provides the potential for beneficial outcomes including improved clinical knowledge, interprofessional role development, communication and collaboration within teams in the clinical setting. There are limited reports in the literature which describe the steps needed to develop and implement IPE experiences for graduate students in the health care professions. However, there is some consensus that readiness for learning, the inclusion of interactive learning elements, and matching student learners within the context of their professional development could be a key to success.

In order to close some of the gaps in knowledge about specific IPE course development, a full day pilot seminar was developed for a group of MEPN and VetMed students by faculty in the graduate nursing and veterinary medicine programs at a large West Coast public university in the United States. The four faculty members who developed the seminar were part of a nine-month Interprofessional Teaching Scholars Program (ITSP). One of the deliverables for the fellowship was the creation of a final project. The IPE seminar was chosen with the premise that all represented disciplines should be involved from the onset in the development of IPE teaching and learning sessions which include their discipline.

The Project

Faculty worked together to create an all-day (eight hour) case-based problem-learning seminar about an elderly man with mild dementia, George Palo (age 90) and his Golden Retriever, Max (age 13). The seminar was divided into four subsections and implemented on Saturday, May 13, 2017. Topics included: 1) Pain assessment and management in non-verbal mammals; 2) Cross species infections; 3) Therapeutic benefits of the human/animal bond; and 4) Grief and loss/Death and dying.

Twenty-four MEPN and 13 VetMed students followed the fictitious case of “George and Max” throughout the day. The scenario began with both entering the emergency department with gastric distress, lethargy and vomiting which was a result of a cross-species infection. A coherent history was unattainable from George. As the scenario unfolded, it became apparent that Max had a terminal condition and George needed to decide about whether or not to prolong Max’s life. Each of the four sessions began with a mini-lecture on the topic. After the lecture, students were separated into groups of eight for the small group work facilitated by two faculty members (one from each school). The groups reconvened into the large group to report their work. There was an hour break for a catered lunch and at the end of the seminar, MEPN students had the option to take a tour of the animal hospital.

The IPE faculty encountered challenges during the development phase which included administrative resistance for implementing the seminar. The resistance stemmed from the structural and logistical
differences in curricula for each school, concern about violation of the Carnegie Rules, the conundrum of how to provide students units/credit for the session, a 20 mile geographic separation between the two different schools, and resources such as funding, materials and faculty time.

A step by step script, objectives and a timeline was developed. Each faculty representative was responsible for recruiting faculty facilitators and students from their respective schools and developing the mechanics for providing course credit for students. Course materials were placed on a mutually accessible student management system in advance of the program. Faculty facilitators were provided the script, objectives, and teaching guidelines a week in advance of the session.

Student and faculty evaluations of the program were obtained which included reflective writing about the session. Twenty-eight students and six faculty facilitators completed the evaluations.

Outcomes

All 24 MEPN students participated as part of a collaborative practice course. It was difficult attracting VetMed students for the Saturday session. Saturday was originally chosen in order to avoid conflicts with other courses. Also, the VetMed students were varied in their educational journey, ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate.

Both students and faculty expressed satisfaction with the session and provided substantive descriptions about what worked and where improvements might be made. Students verified the benefit of taking an interprofessional approach to clinical scenarios. For example, one MEPN student stated, “Stepping into their (VetMed) shoes and looking at the case through their lens made me look at the case from a much broader perspective”. Other students reported acquiring new clinical knowledge such as how to assess non-verbal patients, how to approach grief and loss in a geriatric patient and how to assess dehydration which was similar in both human and animal cases.

Faculty facilitators reported that the small group discussions with a mix of students were beneficial to learning. They appreciated the scripted guidelines. They also suggested pre-session training for facilitators, creating better matching for student learners between disciplines and avoiding Saturdays.

Conclusion

Creating meaningful IPE experiences can be labor intensive and time consuming, but also rewarding for students and faculty. The pathway to success lies in the ability to overcome structural and resource challenges, to obtain administrative support, to develop an organized program with clear objectives, guidelines and a timeline at the onset with the IP faculty team, to provide adequate faculty development and to match student learners for a maximal learning experience.

Title:
What Can Graduate Master’s Entry Nursing Students and Veterinary Medicine Students Learn From Each Other?

Keywords:
Case-based learning, Graduate Nursing and Veterinary Medicine and Interprofessional Education

References:
Abstract Summary:
The purpose of this project was to bring graduate Masters Entry Nursing students together with Veterinary Medicine students to learn from each other about pain assessment/management, cross-species infections, death, grief and loss. This case-based interprofessional experience was created and taught by faculty from both departments. Successes and challenges were experienced.

Content Outline:

Introduction

1. The Institute of Medicine and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing recommend building competencies in Interprofessional collaborative education and practice (IPE and IPP).
2. The literature demonstrates mixed reviews about the success of IPE in improving IPP.
3. An interprofessional educational session with graduate nursing and veterinary medicine faculty and students was piloted using a case-based exemplar of George Palo (age 90) and his Golden
Retriever, Max (age 13) to highlight the key concepts of pain assessment and management, cross-species infection, death, grief and loss.

**Body**

**Main Point #1:** Simply placing students together in a learning environment does not create the optimal learning experience. Active learning and small group discussions may be a key for retention and application of principles.

**Supporting point #1:** Students engaged in the process expressed a high level of satisfaction with the experience in their reflective writing.

*Examples of comments included:*

- “The VetMed experience was AMAZING…and it really broadened my view of collaborative practice.”

- “It was interesting learning the vet med students’ perspectives and their train of thought working through the case. Stepping into their shoes and looking at the case through their lens made me look at the case from a much broader perspective.”

**Supporting point #2:** Students were also able to identify key clinical tools to consider in patient care.

*Comments included:*

- “Assessing patients who are unable to speak for themselves”

- “How to approach (grief and loss) with an aging person who is already experiencing so much loss in other areas of his life was helpful to think through”

- “…in both disciplines, we were assessing in the same way for dehydration: dry mucous membranes, poor skin turgor, sunken eyes and the labs needed…”

**Main Point #2:** An important element for success is buy in, planning and implementation by all faculty members of the IPE team (in this case, School of Nursing and School of Veterinary Medicine). Suggested areas for improvement included: matching student learners better and providing some pre-class faculty training on facilitating to meet the core objectives.

**Supporting point #1:** An Interprofessional Teaching Scholars Program offered the opportunity for faculty from Veterinary Medicine and Graduate Nursing to meet regularly for nine months and plan the program and tackle the structural challenges.

a) Structural challenges included: geographic distance between the two schools; timing of when and where the session would meet; complying with the Carnegie Rules for student workload; accessing adequate resources (faculty facilitators, food, teaching materials).

b) Other challenges included: silos in curriculum and resistance from some administrators to modify the standard curriculum.

c) The IPE faculty were able to act as conduits to resolve the structural issues for the pilot. However, ongoing support to continue the effort remains difficult.
Supporting point #2: Creating the timeline and the script for the activities during the day kept the program on schedule, allowed the objectives to be met and provided a guideline for the recruited faculty facilitators for the day. Faculty facilitators provided mixed reviews about the experience.

Comments from faculty facilitators included:

- “Small group discussion of multiple perspectives (was beneficial)”
- “Having mixed groups with a clear focus (the case) was excellent for learning”
- “It was a pleasure to watch these health care professionals in training recognize areas of overlap in their training and opportunities to cross support their clients”
- “Facilitators were not always aligned in terms of following the objectives established by the course organizers.”
- “More homogeneity in needed amongst the vet learners (which included undergraduate to post graduate students).”
- “Have some pre-training for facilitators so what they did was more consistent from group to group.”

III. Conclusion

Creating meaningful Interprofessional Educational experiences is labor intensive and time consuming, but can also be rewarding for students and faculty. The pathway for success lies in the ability to overcome structural and resource challenges, to solicit support from educational administration, to appropriately match students for the experience, to develop an organized program with timeline, objectives and faculty guidelines and to provide adequate faculty development in advance of the program.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author
Susan L. Adams, PhD, RN, NP-BC
University of California-Davis
School of Nursing
Assistant Professor
Sacramento CA
USA

Professional Experience: Dr. Susan L. Adams is a women’s health nurse practitioner and maternity clinical specialist who ran a specialty high risk pregnancy program for dually diagnosed pregnant women. Her doctoral work was with pregnant women and new mothers who used crack cocaine. She also served as an elected member of the Marin County, California Board of Supervisors where her leadership helped to build the Support and Release After Treatment mentally ill offenders program. She is currently teaching leadership, health policy and women’s health classes at UC Davis, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.

Author Summary: Dr. Susan L. Adams, is a nurse practitioner and Assistant Clinical Professor at the UC Davis School of Nursing. She served for 12 years as an elected county supervisor and brings her skills in leadership, health policy and the creation of successful interdisciplinary collaborations to UC Davis. Her clinical expertise and interest is in women’s health, perinatal addiction and reproductive choice. She has been tasked to build and strengthen Interprofessional Education (IP) and collaboration opportunities.