The Evolution of an Interprofessional Approach to Combatting Childhood Obesity in an Urban Setting

Tami L. Jakubowski, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC, CSN  
Frances M. Maguire School of Nursing and Health Professions, Gwynedd Mercy University, Gwynedd Valley, PA, USA  
Tracy J. Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN  
Department of Nursing, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, USA  

Purpose: The purpose of the interprofessional approach to combatting childhood obesity was to establish a network of professionals working together to improve children’s health.

Introduction: The IOM report stressed the importance of Interprofessional Education Collaboration to practice (IEP). IEP is comprised of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American Dental Education Association, Association of American Medical Colleges and Association of Schools of Public Health who worked together to define interprofessional education and the associated competencies. This report identified four domains of competencies: 1. Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice; 2. Roles/Responsibilities; 3. Interprofessional Communication, and; 4. Teams and Teamwork. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) definition of IPE is two or more professions learning together or about each other’s role in order to provide effective collaboration with the goal of improved health outcomes. The College of New Jersey School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science in conjunction with community partners developed an interprofessional program to combat childhood obesity in urban elementary schools. Our intervention had teams of students and practitioners provide care in a collaborative manner, including students, teachers, administration, and parents in the planning and implementation of care. The integration of students in their formative years as health professionals allows them the opportunity to collaborate with other disciplines and practice interdisciplinary communication skills while learning leadership responsibilities. The goal of the collaboration was higher quality of care, improved communication skills, and the value of interprofessional collaboration.

Methodology/Implementation: The interdisciplinary program afforded participants opportunities to share ideas with members of the interprofessional team. Nursing students observed faculty and other professionals model collaboration, interest in their discipline, and continued learning. Undergraduate nursing students were afforded the opportunity to work with the eleven community health partners in a variety of disciplines including after-school programs, community gardens, community clinics, nutritionists, professional chefs, and health educators.

Evaluation/Results: The CHC benefited children, elementary schools, nursing students, faculty, and community partners. Children and schools gained resources, knowledge, and improvements in overall health. Nursing students participated in collaborative practice and interdisciplinary communication while developing leadership skills. Faculty in multiple disciplines developed a new understanding and appreciation for others’ expertise and collaborated on scholarly work. Collaboration with nursing students and faculty enhanced the ability of community partners to provide programs and services to urban elementary school children.

Title:  
The Evolution of an Interprofessional Approach to Combatting Childhood Obesity in an Urban Setting

Keywords:  
Childhood obesity, Interprofessional collaboration and Nursing Education
References:

New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Comprehensive Health and Physical Education.


Abstract Summary:
An interprofessional collaborative model was used to improve child health in an urban setting. Participants were afforded the opportunity to share their expertise with members of the interprofessional team to positively impact all participants. All members gained insight regarding the expertise and contributions of other professions.

Content Outline:
The College of New Jersey School of Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science in conjunction with community partners developed an interprofessional program to combat childhood obesity in urban elementary schools. The Interprofessional Education Collaborative comprised of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American Dental Education Association, Association of American Medical Colleges and Association of Schools of Public Health worked together to define interprofessional education and the associated competencies. This report identified four domains of competencies: 1. Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice; 2. Roles/Responsibilities; 3. Interprofessional Communication, and; 4. Teams and Teamwork. The World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of IPE is two or more professions learning together or about each other’s role in order to provide effective collaboration with the goal of improved health outcomes. Our intervention had teams of students and practitioners provide care in a collaborative manner, including students, teachers, administration, and parents in the planning and implementation of care. The integration of students in their formative years as health professionals allows them the opportunity to collaborate with other disciplines and practice
interdisciplinary communication skills while learning leadership responsibilities. The goal of the collaboration was higher quality of care, improved communication skills, and the value of interprofessional collaboration.

Coordination is key for a successful school health program. In order for student learning and skill acquisition to take place, the partners of the Community Health Collaborative (CHC) had to carefully coordinate services and activities. Urban school systems have limited resources, therefore a coordinated approach to health education is optimal. Collaboration with community partners can fulfill necessary gaps that school systems are unable to provide on their own. The need for children to learn about health promotion is critical, therefore a shared commitment by all community members is crucial.

The CHC was comprised of eleven community partners which provided a safe and supportive environment to improve the health and development of the children. By increasing the number of CHC partners involved, resources were maximized and students' understanding was enhanced. A collaborative school health program can be implemented to meet the needs of the whole child and maximize the positive effects on student, schools, and communities while integrating cooperation of multiple disciplines.

Integration of nursing students early in their education in collaboration with teachers, administrators, and faculty in complementary disciplines allowed for the exploration of professional boundaries and learning with, about, and from each other. Our ultimate goal of the interprofessional collaboration began with an established network of professionals working together to improve children's health and increase parental knowledge and engagement.

First Primary Presenting Author
Primary Presenting Author
Tami L. Jakubowski, DNP, RN, CPNP-PC, CSN
Gwynedd Mercy University
Frances M. Maguire School of Nursing and Health Professions
Associate Professor
Gwynedd Valley PA
USA


Author Summary: Tami L. Jakubowski is an Associate Professor at Gwynedd Mercy University. She has over 25 years of experience as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. Tami is a certified school nurse in Pennsylvania, and is a Johnson & Johnson School Nurse Fellow.

Second Secondary Presenting Author
Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author
Tracy J. Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN
The College of New Jersey
Department of Nursing
Assistant Professor
Ewing NJ
USA

**Author Summary:** I have been a registered nurse for over 25 years and I have over 16 years teaching experience at a university. I have extensive experience public speaking in various venues including national conferences. An assistant professor at The College of New Jersey, certified school nurse, a certified nurse educator and a J & J School Nurse Fellow.