REPORT
2010 INTERPROFESSIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE WORKSHOP
Background

Through its National Palliative Care Program, the Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) Project was a 2009 initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Funding opportunities were made available to Universities throughout Australia to support undergraduate health professional education and training to promote the development of graduates to be better equipped to provide palliative care. A proposal was put forward and funding was obtained by Curtin University to develop and implement a one day interprofessional workshop in palliative care.

Student Selection

Final year undergraduate students from Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Social Work and Nursing were invited to participate in the full day workshop. The number of participants was capped to 72 students (18 students from each discipline) due to venue restrictions. However, interest in attending the workshop far outweighed the number of places available to students.

All students were required to read “Motor Neurone Disease – a Problem Solving Approach” prior to attending the workshop.

The Workshop

The Interprofessional Palliative Care Workshop was conducted at Technology Park, Bentley. Two students from each profession were pre-allocated into groups of eight students, ensuring that each profession was represented on a single table. Structure of the workshop and creation of the learning materials were based on a person with Motor Neurone Disease taken from the PCC4U CD-ROM. Students received a series of presentations by speakers from each profession – social work, nursing, occupational therapy and pharmacy. These presentations were interspersed with a number of team based student learning activities. For example, within their team students were asked to identify issues for the client and his family at a particular phase of the disease.

Activities followed the trajectory of illness of Motor Neurone Disease, covering the impact of diagnosis, the progression of illness and end of life care. Each activity expanded and built on the previous activity, culminating in a final role play where students assumed the role of the client, family member or health professional. At the end of the workshop, students were asked to regroup as a profession and reflect on the day’s proceedings.

The workshop provided both students and staff an ideal forum to engage and participate in interprofessional collaboration and teamwork whilst learning from, with and about one another’s profession.

Evaluation

Students completed both qualitative and quantitative evaluations about their views on palliative care, collaborative working and the workshop. Views on palliative care were assessed pre and post workshop using modified questions from the Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) Student Pre and Post – Implementation Questionnaire. Students’ attitudes towards interprofessional learning were also assessed both pre and post workshop using a modified Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (Parsell and Bligh, 1999). In addition, students were asked to evaluate the workshop itself. The results of these surveys are summarised below:

Students’ self-ratings of palliative care competency

Students were asked to rate their knowledge, confidence and how well prepared they felt with caring for people with life-limiting conditions both before and after the workshop. The above graph clearly demonstrates a significant increase in all three areas.
Readiness for interprofessional learning

Generally students came to the workshop with a clear sense of their professional identity (PI) as well as a strong positive attitude towards the importance of collaboration and team work (T & C) when working in healthcare. Therefore, no change was evident in these areas.

What was interesting was that, despite receiving presentations on profession-specific management in palliative care, students appeared less clear about roles and responsibilities (R & R) following the workshop. There was certainly healthy discussion around overlapping roles by the social work, occupational therapy and nursing students during the reflective session.

When asked in the evaluation about how views on other health professions' roles are changed, sixty percent of students believed that the workshop gave them a greater understanding of the roles that other health professions played. Others noted that the workshop had allowed them to break down some of the stereotypes of other health professionals, and gave them a better understanding of how their role fitted into an interprofessional team.

Many students highlighted the importance of collaboration within the team or illustrated how collaboration related to overlapping roles.

“All of the professions overlap, however the limitations in each profession are strengths in others.”

“Many of the health professionals have similar roles and that it is not a negative thing as we can work together to enhance clients care.”

Overall workshop evaluation
Overall workshop ratings were positive:
39.3% - excellent
46.4% - very good
14.3% - Good

About 40% of students commented that the workshop had allowed them to develop greater communication skills, as well as opportunities to practice cooperation, negotiation, and listening skills. With 35% feeling that they were now better able to or willing to collaborate with other health professionals.

A quarter of the respondents indicated that the workshop had increased their confidence in their knowledge and ability to work both as part of an IP team and in areas of palliative care. This was achieved simply through the acquisition of new knowledge, or because it allowed the student to understand the value of their own profession within the team.

“Glad to have the opportunity to discuss clients with other health professionals, increased confidence in voicing our professional opinions and negotiating.”

“I now understand other professionals’ role and know who should refer to.”

“There has been reciprocal learning, hence learning with, from and about other’s roles.”

Other secondary themes that were significant though less frequently mentioned were a continued emphasis on client centred care and the value of having space to discuss issues with other individuals from other backgrounds freely.

“I am aware that each professional should work closely together to facilitate patients care.”

“Helped me to learn how to work with other health professionals to provide effective and excellent care for patients.”

When asked about what the best aspects of the workshop were, students gave overwhelming positive responses toward the interactivity of the workshop - the opportunity for open discussion and role play, and the interaction between other students, staff and facilitators. They reiterated the value of working with other students and staff from different health backgrounds.

### Subscale

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<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop</th>
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<th>Post-workshop</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>T &amp; C</td>
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<tr>
<td>PI</td>
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<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>27%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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“Being seated with other profession students and facilitating open and honest, candid discussions. Staff taking the time to interact with students and have meaningful conversations with no judgement and laughter.”

Lastly, students were invited to provide suggestions for improvement. There were three strong themes evident in their responses:

- Regular interprofessional workshops should be available throughout the course (not just in final year)
- More disciplines should be included
- After death care for family should be covered in a workshop on palliative care.

Feedback from Facilitators

“My recent experience of working with a group of health professionals at Curtin highlighted the significance of process in creating a meaningful IPE experience for both students and educators. In thinking about what we wanted students to experience, our team engaged in a parallel process of interprofessional and interdisciplinary exchange. One of the exciting aspects of the process, and perhaps the most enjoyable, was the opportunity to develop personal and professional relationships with colleagues; allowing me to gain a more insightful understanding of my colleagues’ professions. The planning process also reaffirmed and challenged my own understanding of social work as a profession. Drawing on my experience as a social worker was a starting point but it was important to locate my practice within a broader context of social work understandings which students from a range of disciplines could engage”.

“While I could continue writing about the experience I think the most important point to make is that for IPE to be successful, process, not just outcomes, must be privileged. This means that planning time must be realistic, resources adequate and acknowledgement through workload allocation attached. To under-resource IPE is to guarantee its return to the margins of the educational setting. As educators we have a responsibility to ensure that students are equipped with and experience the power of inter-professional collaboration”.

“The Workshop took both time and energy to prepare and I had to be very committed to it to attend all scheduled meetings. It was really good having a project manager, Michelle Donaldson, as she took care of a lot of the administration that would have fallen on the academics. She did a great job! We had a good team to work with and this contributed to the success of the day. Each member of the team did what she was responsible for, which is fantastic. I would have wished for my Head of School to know the commitment and time I dedicated to this workshop”.

Acknowledgements

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Reference

Motor Neurone Disease – a Problem Solving Approach. PCC4U CD –ROM.
Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) Student Pre and Post – Implementation Questionnaire.

Authors

This report was compiled by Diane Franklin, Teaching and Learning Fellow, and Michelle Donaldson, Project Officer, Curtin University, September 2010.