SIMULATION-BASED LEARNING FOR PROMOTING INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE IN GERONTOLOGICAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Introduction:
Traditional teaching activities offered by interdisciplinary health and social care providers in separate occasions are limited in equipping students with teamwork skills and to understand the dynamic, difficulties and challenges associated with care coordination and planning. Simulation has been adopted in interprofessional education as it offers the benefits of immersing students in a realistic environment closer to the practice settings and increasing student engagement in the learning process.

Aim:
To develop simulation-based learning resources to enhance gerontological students’ capability in interprofessional collaborative practice.

Methods:
Individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 aged care providers to explore the meaning of interprofessional collaborative practice among aged care providers, and facilitators of and barriers to interprofessional collaborative practice. The findings were used to inform the development of a bank of high-quality web-based simulation learning materials specifically interdisciplinary case conferences with critical-thinking exercises related to care coordination, planning of care and teamwork.

Results:
The 16 respondents (seven female (43.8%); 9 male (56.3%)) included two community nurses, four social workers, two doctors, two pharmacists, two physiotherapists, two occupational therapists and two graduates from the Bachelor of Science in Gerontology programme. Over 90% possess a Bachelor’s degree and 69% of them had over 10 years of work experience. The findings showed that interprofessional collaborative practice is regarded as integral to enhance person-centered care. However, major barriers to interprofessional collaborative practice include inadequate knowledge on healthcare professions' scope of practice, lack of training, professional culture and stereotypes, and liability issues. Engaging students earlier in the curriculum regarding shared decision-making and effective group communication processes facilitate interprofessional collaborative practice. Utilising case-based studies with meaningful discussions help equip students with knowledge of care providers’ roles and teamwork skills. Based on the findings, 10 video-taped simulated interdisciplinary case conferences were developed in collaboration with an interprofessional team. The scenarios cover common topics about managing older persons with complex life situations and challenges in community, rehabilitative and residential care settings. The gerontological students serve as care coordinators and an interdisciplinary care team participate in the case conferences. Critical-thinking exercises are developed to facilitate on-line and classroom discussion among students and teachers.

Discussion and conclusion:
This project integrates expertise from various healthcare disciplines including nursing, pharmacy, medicine, and social work. The simulated interdisciplinary case conferences are expected to facilitate the development of gerontological students’ competence in interdisciplinary team-based care, and hence facilitate the students’ professional development. Quantitative evaluation will be conducted to evaluate students’ change in interprofessional socialisation.

Keywords: Gerontology, interprofessional collaboration, simulated learning, technology-enhanced learning.