Introduction

Interdisciplinary health care teams face challenges not normally encountered by other uni-disciplinary or non-health care teams. These challenges include sharing professional roles and expertise, planning and decision-making, while delivering quality patient care within complex contexts.

Credit: Robyn Sussel

http://signals.ca/top-ten-list-achieve-interdisciplinarity/

Workforce Restructuring

Workforce re-structuring to meet these needs requires the interdisciplinary teams to integrate changing organisational values with new modes of service delivery. While these changes impact across healthcare as a whole, in certain sectors these organisational challenges have evoked widespread debate, in particular primary care, rehabilitation, and care of the elderly. Of these, primary care is perceived to have the least likely level of success with interdisciplinary team work. Indeed, some suggest that an interdisciplinary culture may only be possible as new generations of healthcare professionals enter the workforce..

Necessity of interdisciplinary team work

The need for interdisciplinary team work is increasing as a result of a number of factors including:

1) An aging population with frail older people and larger numbers of patients with more complex needs associated with chronic diseases;

2) The increasing complexity of skills and knowledge required to provide comprehensive care to patients;

3) Increasing specialization within health professions and a corresponding fragmentation of disciplinary knowledge resulting in no health care professional is able to meet all the complex needs of their patients;

4) The current emphasis in many countries' policy documents on multi-professional team work and development of shared learning;

5) The pursuit of continuity of care within the movement towards continuous quality improvement (CQI)

IDC Teams
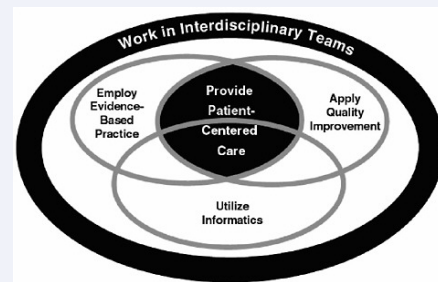
Competencies of an interdisciplinary team:

1. Identifies a leader who establishes a clear direction and vision for the team, while listening and providing support and supervision to the team members.

2. Incorporates a set of values that clearly provide direction for the team's service provision; these values should be visible and consistently portrayed.

3. Demonstrates a team culture and interdisciplinary atmosphere of trust where contributions are valued and consensus is fostered.

4. Ensures appropriate processes and infrastructures are in place to uphold the vision of the service (for example, referral criteria, communications infrastructure).

5. Provides quality patient-focused services with documented outcomes; utilizes feedback to improve the quality of care.

6. Utilizes communication strategies that promote intra-team communication, collaborative decision-making and effective team processes.

7. Provides sufficient team staffing to integrate an appropriate mix of skills, competencies, and personalities to meet the needs of patients and enhance smooth functioning.

8. Facilitates recruitment of staff who demonstrate interdisciplinary competencies including team functioning, collaborative leadership, communication, and sufficient professional knowledge and experience.

9. Promotes role interdependence while respecting individual roles and autonomy.

10. Facilitates personal development through appropriate training, rewards, recognition, and opportunities for career development.