

Inter-professional learning

Inter-professional Learning or Inter-professional Education occurs when two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care.

Collaboration occurs when two or more individuals from different backgrounds with **complementary skills** interact to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own.

The need for Inter-Professional Practice

The majority of cancer patients see more than 28 different health professionals within the first 12 months of diagnosis.

If these health professionals all use different terminology, had limited understanding of one another's roles, and were not working towards common goals that involved decision making with the patient, this could lead to unnecessary confusion, frustration, uncertainty, and feelings of helplessness.

Patients have more access to information than ever before, however most do not know how to establish what is credible information on their own.

As health professionals we must be aware of one another's skills and expertise, we need to understand common terminology and ensure other health professionals understand our discipline of Radiation Therapy.

Patients will often raise concerns that may not be related to their Radiation Therapy specifically, however they feel a sense of trust and understanding with the RT as they have seen them everyday. In these situations a sound knowledge of inter-professional practice is valuable.

6 inter-professional learning domains:

1. TEAMWORK

2. Roles and responsibilities

3. Communication

4. Learning and critical reflection

5. Relationships with and recognising the needs of the patient

6. Ethical practice

Teamwork in the health care setting

Breakdown in communication or a lack of teamwork can contribute to adverse patient outcomes.

Clinical information and the transfer of professional responsibility and accountability for some or all aspects of care for a patient, or group of patients, to another person or professional group on a temporary or permanent basis is a critical process to patient safety.

Teamwork and effective communication is essential to achieve safe quality and intended clinical outcomes.

The nature of teams is varied and complex, they include:

1. Teams that draw from a single professional group;

2. Multi-professional teams;

3. Teams that work closely together in one place;

4. Teams that are geographically distributed;

5. Teams with constant membership; and

6. Teams with constantly changing membership.

Regardless of the type and nature of the team they can be said to share certain characteristics. These include:

Team members have specific roles and interact together to achieve a common goal;

Teams make decisions;

Teams possess specialized knowledge and skills and often function under conditions of high workloads;

Teams differ from small groups in as much as they embody a collective action arising out of task interdependency.

There are many types of teams in healthcare.

Roles of individuals on the team are often flexible and opportunistic such as the leadership changing depending on the required expertise, time available and clinical workloads or the RT or nurse taking on the patient education role, as they are the ones that have the most patient contact.

Teamwork in the health care setting (cont)

In support of patient-centred care and patient safety, the patient and their carer's are increasingly being considered as active members of the health-care team.

Engaging the patient as a team member can improve the safety and quality of their care as they are a valued information source being the only member of the team who is present at all times during their care.

Six simple characteristics that underpin effective health-care teams:

1. **Common purpose** - Team members generate a common and clearly defined purpose that includes collective interests and demonstrates shared ownership.

2. **Measurable goals** - Teams set goals that are measurable and focused on the team's task.

3. **Effective leadership** - Teams require effective leadership that set and maintain structures, manage conflict, listen to members and trust and support members

4. **Effective communication** - Good teams share ideas and information quickly and regularly, keep electronic records as well as allow time for team reflection.

5. **Good cohesion** - Cohesive teams have a unique and identifiable team spirit and commitment and have greater longevity, as team members want to continue working together.

6. **Mutual respect** - Effective teams have members who respect the talents and beliefs of each person in addition to their professional contributions.