Further Applications to Health Care Management Careers:
Teamwork and Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

Teamwork is essential to the delivery of health care services, so in this presentation we explore more deeply the importance of teamwork and approaches to enhance team effectiveness in health care organizations.

Benefits of Interdisciplinary Teamwork and Team Performance

In a study funded by the Office of Rural Health Policy, Andrew Coburn and Zach Gage-Croll wrote, “Research has found that 70% of all medical errors can be attributed to breakdowns in healthcare team interactions. Patient safety experts agree that communication and other teamwork skills are critical in the prevention and mitigation of medical errors, and that teamwork is essential to achieving high reliability in healthcare organizations.”

Our textbook also describes numerous benefits of effective work teams. Interdisciplinary teamwork and team performance can result in improved:

- Communication and coordination,
- Quality and safety of patient care services,
- Clinical outcomes,
- Resource utilization and productivity,
- Job satisfaction and lower employee turnover, and
- Patient satisfaction.

Elements of Interprofessional Teamwork and Team-Based Practice

In a 2011 report, the Interprofessional Education Collaborative cites D’Amour and Oandasan in defining interprofessional practice as “the process by which professionals reflect on and develop ways of practicing that provide an integrated and cohesive answer to the needs of the patient, client, family, or population. It involves continuous interaction and knowledge sharing between professionals, organized to solve or explore a variety of education and care issues all while seeking to optimize the patient’s participation.”

Interprofessional teamwork and team-based practice are supported by highly patient-centered approach to care, quality improvement tools and culture, and underlying health information technology systems.

Competency Domains for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

The Interprofessional Education Collaborative defines four core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice.

The first is to work with individuals of other professions to maintain a climate of mutual respect and shared values.

Second, is to use the knowledge of one’s own role and those of other professions to appropriately assess and address the healthcare needs of the patients and populations served.

The third competency area is to communicate with patients, families, communities, and other health professionals in a responsive and responsible manner that supports a team approach to the maintenance of health and the treatment of disease.
And fourth is applying relationship-building values and the principles of team dynamics to perform effectively in different team roles to plan and deliver patient- and population-centered care.

**What Makes Health Professionals Effective Team Members?**

What makes health professionals effective team members?

Sandra Leggat identifies a range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that can facilitate team performance. Taking inventory of these areas can be extremely helpful in assembling team members who have diverse yet complimentary skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Skills include ability to influence, data analysis, conflict management and decision-making abilities, leadership capabilities, listening skills, meeting management, ability to motivate, planning, time management, and verbal communication skills.

Knowledge areas include clinical knowledge; management knowledge; understanding of organizational goals, strategies, politics, and the roles of team members; self-awareness; team development; and key performance indicators for the team and organization overall.

Attitude dimensions that support interdisciplinary teamwork are a commitment to patients and the organization, a cooperative and positive attitude, the courage to disagree where appropriate, encouraging others, an interest in learning, respect for others, self-confidence, a sense of humor, prior teamwork experience, and tolerance of stress.

Let’s pause for a minute and think about teams you’ve been a part of at work, at school, in your community, or in athletics. Which of these skills, knowledge, and attitude areas were strengths and which were opportunities for improvement in your teamwork experience?

**What Determines Team Effectiveness?**

What determines team effectiveness?

Fried, Topping, and Edmondson present a practical and insightful four-factor model of team effectiveness.

The first factor, team characteristics, includes such dimensions as team size, composition, and diversity; status differences; psychological safety; team norms; and team cohesiveness.

Second is the nature of the work, including team goals and the degree of interprofessional collaboration required for the work at hand.

The third factor is the environmental context, meaning intergroup relationships and conflict, organizational culture, and influences from the external environment.

These three factors combine into the team process, which includes team leadership, communication structure, interaction patterns, and decision-making.

In summary, all of these factors combine and interact to determine team effectiveness, performance, team member satisfaction, and the result and quality of work performed.

**Examples of Effective Teamwork**

Putting this all together, we conclude this presentation with a few examples of successful teamwork. The examples are from Mountain View Hospital in Madras, Oregon, as reported by Coburn and Gage-Croll.

The first example is improved communication that facilitated increased speed and coordination during critical care situations in the emergency department.
Next, inclusion of patients and their families in team huddles and care planning fostered greater patient engagement in the care process.

Also, reductions in and prevention of incorrect dosage orders, protocol errors, and supply shortages were achieved.

To involve and engage physicians, the hospital utilized physician leaders to champion interdisciplinary teams and serve as trainers in team-based processes.

In summary, teamwork is essential to the delivery of high-quality and efficient health care services, so this presentation has offered ideas and insights into the effective functioning of interdisciplinary work teams in health care organizations.
References:


