

Interprofessional Education Through a Monthly Stroke Support Group

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BACKGROUND

- For health science students, involvement in interprofessional education (IPE) provides an opportunity for collaboration, improves students' knowledge of the roles of other professions, and may improve student readiness for clinical practice.¹⁻⁶
- Current models for IPE vary widely, with many programs implemented through a one-time activity using small group discussion or patient case analysis.^{2,6,7}
- Stroke rehabilitation requires an interdisciplinary team approach for optimal patient care.
- Educational research outlining student perspectives related to the healthcare team are often centered on the diagnosis of stroke.^{2,7,8}
- Evidence predominantly focuses on the inpatient recovery process with minimal to no studies looking at the chronicity of the condition and importance of a team approach beyond the hospital setting.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of IPE provided through student participation in a monthly stroke support group.

METHODS

A monthly stroke support group was developed by Ithaca College faculty members from occupational therapy, physical therapy speech language pathology, and therapeutic recreation.

- Semester long program- 2 students from each profession
- Students were responsible for facilitating discussion and providing information about how their profession would approach various clinical challenges.

This study examined student self-report in the following areas before and after participation:

1. Knowledge of stroke
2. The rehabilitation process
3. The role of each profession

Design: Mixed-methods methodology using a pre-post survey and a post test focus group

Data analysis: Wilcoxon signed-rank test for pretest-posttest data, themes identified using Atlas.ti.

RESULTS

Table 1. Student Demographics

Profession	n	Sex	Level in Program
Occupational Therapy	4	F	Graduate= 2 Senior= 2
Physical Therapy	4	F	Graduate= 2 Senior= 2
Therapeutic Recreation	4	F	Senior= 4
Speech Language Pathology	4	F	Graduate= 4

After participation in 4 meetings, students reported improvements in knowledge of:

- Impairments and activity limitations post stroke ($p=.000$)
- Quality of life post stroke ($p=.002$)
- Understanding of the rehabilitation process ($p=.002$)
- Knowledge of the other professions ($p=.001$)

The following themes were identified during focus group:

- A greater appreciation of how a stroke can affect each person differently.
- The importance of treating the patient, not the diagnosis.
- The importance of listening to the patient's goals.
- That by working in a rehabilitation team, the professions overlap but have different perspectives.

DISCUSSION

- Participation in a stroke support group was successful in achieving the goals of IPE.
- Significant changes in student self-reported learning included increasing knowledge of the effects of a stroke, the other professions, and the collaborative rehabilitation process.
- Stroke support groups benefit stroke survivors and their caregivers⁹. Preliminary evidence also suggests stroke groups benefit student learning by providing opportunities for interprofessional collaboration and education.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- Small sample size
- Levels of student education varied
- Prior student experiences in clinical internships may impact baseline understanding of stroke recovery

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Participation in a stroke support group is a model that may be considered to achieve the goals of IPE while concurrently providing a valuable service to the community and individuals with neurologic conditions.

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Figure 1. Survive and Thrive Stroke Support Group



Figure 2. Speech Language Pathology Student Working with a Participant

