Interprofessional Practice and Education: Multiple Lenses Bring a Sharper Focus

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Keywords
Interprofessional Practice and Education, Team Approach, Core Competencies

Credentials Display and Country
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DOI: 10.15453/2168-6408.1434
In Clifton Springs, NY, a group of professionals gathered as a team to discuss the distinct value of human engagement and participation in everyday occupations. The gathering included an occupational therapist, a social worker, a nurse, an educator, two architects, and two physicians. One of the physicians had recently been awarded funding from the Harvard Medical School to study the value of occupation as a health determinant. It was a productive meeting with the most significant outcome being the agreement to establish a new organization. This new organization was to be called the National Society for the Promotion of Occupational Therapy. The date was March 17, 1917.

One hundred years later, the American Occupational Therapy Association held its centennial anniversary in Philadelphia, where over 13,000 occupational therapy practitioners and students assembled to celebrate the distinct value of occupation in everyday life. Among the many artifacts illustrating our rich history was a life-sized photograph of the founders who met on that spring day in 1917: George Barton, William Dunton, Susan Johnson, Thomas Kidner, Evelyn Gladwin Newton, and Eleanor Clarke Slagle. In their course of study, all occupational therapy practitioners learn these names. Perhaps one in particular may come to mind if asked to recall one of the founders of the profession. More important than recalling a single name is the acknowledgement that a team of diverse professionals founded our profession. Our founders were the first interprofessional team in occupational therapy.

Considering the heightened emphasis on the value of team-based approaches to education and practice among all health care professions, this special issue of the *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT) is timely. Occupational therapy is driven by the philosophical idea that collaboration is essential in delivering health and human services. The profession has clear mandates from both public and private funding sources, who have declared that an interprofessional approach to professional education and practice is essential for best practice outcomes. As stated by the World Health Organization, “it is no longer enough for health workers to be professional. In the current global climate, health workers also need to be interprofessional” (WHO, 2010, p. 36).

In preparation for this special issue, the guest editors discovered an excellent resource for all professionals interested in and committed to advancing interprofessional practice and education. The National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education, created in 2012 with support from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, various foundations, and the University of Minnesota, is an invaluable source of information. Its mission statement indicates that it “offers and supports evaluation, research, data and evidence that ignites the field of interprofessional practice and education and leads to better care, added value and healthier communities” (National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education, 2017, para 1). The center is solely dedicated to the scholarship and advancement of interprofessional collaboration among all health care practitioners. Its website provides links to global interprofessional education.
and practice resources

In addition to the rich resources provided by
the National Center for Interprofessional Practice
and Education, the Interprofessional Education
Collaborative (IPEC) offers exceptional
professional resources. A major contribution of this
organization has been the development and
publication of the Core Competencies for
Interprofessional Collaborative Practice: Report of
an Expert Panel (Interprofessional Education
Collaborative [IPEC], 2011). These competencies,
many of which are embedded in the articles
published in this special issue of OJOT, are
categorized into four major domains as described by
the IPEC. They are:

- Competency Domain 1: Values/Ethics for
  Interprofessional Practice
  Work with individuals of other professions
to maintain a climate of mutual respect and
shared values.
- Competency Domain 2: Roles and
  Responsibilities
  Use the knowledge of one’s own role and
those of other professions to appropriately
assess and address the health care needs of
the patients and populations served.
- Competency Domain 3: Interprofessional
  Communication
  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.
- Competency Domain 4: Teams and
  Teamwork
  Apply relationship-building values and the
principles of team dynamics to perform
effectively in different team roles to plan
and deliver patient/population-centered care
that is safe, timely efficient, effective, and
equitable.

The specific roles, responsibilities, and
competencies that are detailed in each of these
general statements provide a set of standards by
which a team can conduct a self-study to determine
the scope and quality of its interprofessional
practices.

As our profession moves beyond its first 100
years, it can reasonably be expected that
interprofessional practice and education will
become a mainstream method for solving the
complex health care needs of individuals and
targeted populations. This special issue of OJOT
recognizes and celebrates this evolution with
articles about interprofessional practice and
education, including applied research, descriptive
models of practice and education, and informed
professional opinions. We conclude the series of
articles with a “They
Said-They Said” interview with an interprofessional
team who has successfully collaborated for nearly 2
decades, continuously working to apply the core
competencies. Finally, the Sponsor Profile features
Dr. Jennifer Creek, a clinician-educator-scholar,
who successfully engaged in interprofessional
teamwork in an international context and who
continues to champion this approach.
We are grateful for all of the authors who collectively shared their distinct contributions to inform and promote interprofessional practice and education in the occupational therapy profession. It is our hope that readers will be inspired by this information and strive to integrate the Core Competencies of Interprofessional Practice and Education into their clinical and educational roles. Through multiple lenses of shared expertise, commitment, and knowledge, a sharper focus on those served will bring the desired outcomes we strive to achieve in our professional capacity.

Ben J. Atchison, PhD, OTRL, FAOTA, is the Managing Editor of OJOT and has served in this role since 2012. He is Chair Emeritus and Professor Emeritus in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Western Michigan University (WMU). Upon his retirement on June 30, 2017, Dr. Atchison celebrated 42 years of a career that included teaching, service, and scholarship with expertise in pediatrics with a special emphasis in childhood trauma. He is a co-founder of the Southwest Michigan Children’s Trauma Assessment Center at WMU and Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

Michelle A. Suarez, PhD, OTRL, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Western Michigan University (WMU). She has expertise as a clinician, educator, and researcher-scholar in pediatrics with an emphasis on assessment and treatment of children with autism with a focus on relational-regulation dyads as well as food selectivity issues. In addition to her work with children with autism, Dr. Suarez also has expertise in childhood trauma and serves on the interprofessional team of the WMU Southwest Michigan Children’s Trauma Assessment Center.

References