

## AMSA Inter-Professional Education Policy

July, 2009

Inter-professional education (IPE) is teaching designed at improving the co-operation and understanding that exists between different health professions. In this policy IPE is considered in two specific domains;

1. Structured teaching which recognises the expertise of each health discipline
2. Teaching that is undertaken in a group setting consisting of members from different allied-health disciplines

As our health system adapts to caring for patients that require long term care of chronic disease, there has been a move towards health service provision that is holistic in nature and consists of an inter-disciplinary team approach. As this change occurs in the workplace, so must we see a move towards such collaboration in the classroom as we train the next generation of health professionals. Although the evidence base surrounding IPE is not substantial, existing qualitative evidence shows that allied health students feel that time spent with students from other health professions is beneficial for current learning and future practice (NRHN, 2007). This is the kind of educational experience that can help break down existing barriers within the workplace and foster healthy professional relationships and teamwork and enable Australia's future doctors to provide quality healthcare.

AMSA acknowledges the need for evolving health education that is based upon the best evidence available. Presently, some Australian medical schools provide IPE, to varying extents and through different media (or settings/learning opportunities), across the two aforementioned domains. AMSA supports the concept of IPE as a basic principle of medical education and training.

AMSA believes that:

- a. Medical schools should facilitate a learning program which recognises the expertise of each health discipline.
- b. Opportunities should be provided for medical students to learn and work with students from other health professions.
- c. Formal and informal integration with other health professions at the student level will improve inter-professional relationships (Giardino, Giardino & Seigler, 1994) with the aim of improving patient care at the professional level.

AMSA believes that such education should:

- a. Be targeted at improving the co-operation and understanding between different health professions.
- b. Be structured to provide the skills set required for health provision from an inter-professional team perspective.
- c. Be tailored to produce professional relationships at a student level that are desired at a professional level. This may include:
  1. Patient-centered care.
  2. Collaborative and effective communication.
  3. A healthy understanding and respect for the role that each health professional plays in the team, especially with regards to overlapping competencies.
  4. Leadership, teamwork and conflict resolution skills and other generic skills required for team care.

AMSA believes there are components of medical education where IPE would be particularly beneficial. AMSA would like to see that IPE:

- a) Has a particular focus on management perspectives of holistic patient care.
- b) Creates an environment for the exchange of skills and knowledge that may be greater developed in students from other disciplines.
- c) Involves the domains of ethics, professional development and law where perspectives from different disciplines would be particularly valuable.
- d) Maintains the high quality and scope of core competencies expected of medical students.

### References

National Rural Health Network (NRHN), 2007, Interprofessional Education: Position Statement. Retrieved from [http://www.nrhn.org.au/client\\_images/388139.pdf](http://www.nrhn.org.au/client_images/388139.pdf), [Accessed June 2009]

Giardino AP, Giardino ER, Seigler EL. Teaching collaboration to nursing and medical undergraduates. In: Seigler EL, Whitney FW eds. Nurse±Physician Collaboration: Care of Adults and the Elderly. New York: Springer, 1994: pp. 127±57.